

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE
AND LABOUR TURNOVER**

STEVEN GOSS-TURNER

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between organisational culture and labour turnover.

The concept of organisational culture has been the subject of considerable debate within the literature on corporate culture and organisational behaviour. Central to the issue is whether or not managers can create, manage and change culture in the workplace. Some commentators are clear that it is within the sphere of management control; others are equally clear that it is not; others support the idea that managers can influence the dominant culture within their organisation. Organisational culture has become closely associated with the concurrent development of the models of human resource management (HRM). Employee commitment is frequently a stated aim and aspiration for both corporate culture initiatives and HRM practices, both seeking to affect employee behaviour at work. This research investigates how culture within the workplace affects the behaviour of service industry employees and their intentions regarding whether or not to leave their job.

Stability within the workforce is critical to the successful development of a cohesive culture. The intention to leave employment is frequently an outcome of low commitment and employee dissatisfaction. Within the service sector, the hospitality industry strives for consistent service quality, provided by a workforce in direct contact with the customer. However, there is a lack of research into the relationship between organisational culture and labour turnover. Primary research was undertaken in the licensed retail sector, the sector with the highest labour turnover rates within the hospitality industry. In particular, two brands of pubs became the focus for an exploratory, qualitative research study.

In researching the relationship between culture and turnover within the customer-oriented environment of pubs, the methodological approach was informed by the anthropological tradition within the organisational culture literature and by the life and work history research method. The study's contribution to knowledge was significantly informed by the grid / group model, a two-dimensional framework for cultural analysis developed by the anthropologist Mary Douglas. It is concluded that this model provides a robust and effective means of exploring the connections between culture, HRM and labour turnover, as well as the particular challenges of the labour process within service work. Recent literature concerned with the nature of contemporary service work, notably the work of sociologist Marek Korczynski, was also critical to the research and its analysis.

Qualitative data provided insights into employee perceptions of the workplace culture and their labour turnover intentions. The analysis discovered critical inter-relationships between three sets of factors: the espoused corporate values and the brand specifications; the employee and work group commitment; and the symbolic and substantive consumption of the customer. The study concludes that the relativity of alignment between these factors provides insights into the relationship between culture and labour turnover. Theoretical considerations and practical applications of the contribution to knowledge are outlined in terms of providing a framework for a better understanding of this relationship, of value to students, researchers and practitioners.

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Steven Goss-Turner
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Author's Declaration

I declare that the research contained in this thesis, unless otherwise formally indicated within the text, is the original work of the author. The thesis has not been previously submitted to this or any other university for a degree, and does not incorporate any material already submitted for a degree.

Signed

Dated

Chapter 1

1.0 Introduction

The origin of this study lies in the increasing importance of the service sector within the developed economies, and the pressure on businesses to manage their people still more effectively within a highly competitive global market place. This imperative for business success has encouraged all sectors to review organisational structures and relationships in order to become more enterprising, more concerned with factors such as quality, innovation, high performance and employee commitment (Guest, 1987; Salaman, 2001; Legge, 2005; Yang, 2008). The service industries in particular base much of their value and success on the capability of their workforce, and the quality of the services offered by that workforce. Each employee is required to play a crucial role in the transaction between organisation and customer (Redman and Matthews, 1998). As a result the behaviour, attitudes and competencies of employees have become a strategic focus of service sector managers. Managers seek competitive advantage through their employees' performance along with their commitment to the organisation's goals and to the needs of their customers. In Salaman's words, "the employee embodies organisational values and priorities and takes responsibility for realising these with customers" (Salaman, 2001: 191).

The organisation, the employee and the customer are the three elements of a delicately balanced service-oriented relationship (the service encounter) within the domain of service work (Korczynski, 2002). The influential role of the employee in the service encounter has led to much academic and practitioner preoccupation with

workforce management, informed by the developments of the intertwined concepts and models of organisational culture and human resource management (Storey, 2001; Legge, 2005). Such considerations are increasingly contextualised within a service work environment rather than the more traditional manufacturing employment setting (Reeves and Bednar, 1994; Redman and Matthews, 1998; Korczynski, 2002; Appelbaum et al, 2003; Noon and Blyton, 2007). If the service sector employee is to be managed effectively towards high performance, displaying appropriate behaviours, being customer-focused and being committed to the organisation's values, then the prevailing organisational culture and the manifestation of that culture in employee management practices are significant factors in ensuring the success of the enterprise (Tyson, 1995). Examination of the literature in the domains of both organisational culture and human resource management reveals that the objective of generating employee commitment is common to both concepts, "in the hope of achieving desired behavioural outcomes - low labour turnover and high job performance" (Legge, 2005: 215).

1.1 Research study purpose

This study seeks to add to the existing body of knowledge within the areas of organisational culture and the management of employees within the service sector in general and the hospitality industry in particular, by applying new approaches to the labour turnover phenomenon. It seeks to solicit the emic viewpoints of hospitality industry employees in gaining a better understanding of their workplace experiences, perceptions and their intentions regarding labour turnover. The research has been motivated by a determination to gain insight into the relationship between

organisational culture and labour turnover. It is also an objective of the researcher that the findings will make a contribution to those managers and practitioners who are attempting to discover new approaches when addressing the challenge of employee retention.

The specific research questions will be refined following the literature review. Underlying the project is the desire and aim to better understand the connections between the concept of culture and the management of people in service work, and how this relationship impacts upon the labour turnover intentions of employees. The service work setting for the field-work is the licensed retail sector of the hospitality industry. The research also aims to gain insight into another aspect where knowledge appears limited, in terms of how the culture and turnover relationship relates to the three principal elements in service work; the organisation, the employee and the customer.

The objectives of the thesis are:

- To critically evaluate the concept of organisational culture and analyse its connections with contemporary models and approaches to managing human resources within the specific context of service work.
- To examine the phenomenon of labour turnover within the context of organisational culture and the employee commitment element of human resource management models.

- To explore and gain insight into the employment intentions of employees in the hospitality industry with particular reference to their intentions to stay or leave that employment, and the impact on those employment intentions of the prevailing organisational culture within a licensed retail sector organisation.
- To add to our knowledge regarding the relationship between organisational culture and labour turnover within a customer-oriented service environment.
- To inform managerial perspectives and practices in addressing the labour turnover challenge within the service sector in general and the hospitality industry in particular.

In taking forward these objectives it is important to make clear three sets of considerations, at the levels of personal, contextual and academic.

1.2 Personal considerations

At this point of departure, the reader may find it useful to know more about the previous employment experience of the researcher that contributed to the motivation to undertake this study. A brief overview of this background helps to understand influential factors in the development of the researcher's world-view, factors contributing to the ontological position at the outset. A growing self-awareness by the researcher of the influence of prior experience was an important part of the process of developing a proposal, the methodology and the methods for the research.

The researcher's personal connection to the major themes of this thesis derive from a career in both hospitality management operations and in higher education.

Following a first degree in hotel and catering management and a postgraduate diploma in personnel management, the researcher was employed by a multi-site hotel and catering chain for almost 20 years, fulfilling a number of different roles in hotel operations and human resource management (HRM). These roles were predominantly concerned with employee recruitment, training and development aspects. An early influence was an assignment as a personnel manager in a London hotel in the late 1970's, a role dominated by constant recruitment and selection priorities, reflecting the high labour turnover rates prevailing. Consistency of standards was affected by this turnover, training of new staff was hurried and lacked coordination, and human resource initiatives were often 'derailed' by the traditionally autocratic style of the hotel's senior line management.

Later, the researcher held a position within the head office personnel function, a role that enabled a more strategic appraisal of the company's HRM policies and practices. High levels of labour turnover in the hotel and restaurant outlets continued to provide the most significant people management difficulties. A number of initiatives were put in place, with varying success, ranging from reviews of terms and conditions, improved benefits, targeted training courses and, in the late 1980's, an early attempt to change behaviours and attitudes of management by a programme of workshops concerned with being customer and employee-focused. This programme was

significantly influenced by a business video of the time, based on the book, “In Search of Excellence” by Peters and Waterman (1982). It was as a facilitator of these programmes that the researcher first experienced the attempt to change the culture within an organisation, ‘culture change’ becoming a frequently articulated phrase within the managerial language of the company. Despite this range of initiatives, labour turnover remained stubbornly high across the company.

On entering higher education as a lecturer in 1992 the researcher registered for a Masters degree in Human Resource Development, and conducted a dissertation research project within hospitality chains. The principle aim of the project was to investigate the role of the multi-site manager or area manager within firms which included hotel chains, restaurant groups and pub companies, the latter also known as licensed retailers. In determining the challenges facing multi-site managers, the significance of organisational culture emerged. The area manager was very much an interface between the strategic executive of the company and the front line service workers within the business units. In most of the companies, area managers were charged by senior management to reinforce the espoused values and culture of the organisations. Underpinning this area management role was a strategic intent of improving customer service through appropriate behaviours and attitudes of the employees.

The outcomes of this postgraduate study awakened a personal interest in the concept of organisational culture and its relationship to employee behaviour and

commitment, to employee satisfaction and the subsequent labour turnover intentions of the employee regarding staying or leaving their employment. Reflecting on personal experience, as both practitioner and student, and reviewing literature from a much wider research base has been an important motivational element and influenced the existing personal paradigms concerning the key themes of the study. It has resulted in a commitment to contributing to knowledge in the area of organisational culture and its relationship to labour turnover, and hence to this PhD programme of study.

1.2.1 Development of a philosophical position

The personal experiences summarised above, stretching over a period of three decades, inevitably influenced the development of assumptions and perceptions related to managing people in service work, labour turnover and the concept of organisational culture. It was felt important to question and confront such assumptions within the framing of this thesis, its literature base and methodological approach. A detailed discussion of the author's ontological and epistemological stance as a researcher is provided in the methodology chapter.

The assumptions borne out of extensive work experience within the hospitality industry were identified, reflected upon and challenged. Within the researcher's employment experience, labour turnover was always considered a problem to be eradicated. However, some commentators have pointed to the benefits from some level of turnover (e.g. Wood, 1992). That labour turnover rates within hospitality are

the highest of all industrial sectors in many statistical reports (Hoque, 2000; Lucas, 2004) seems undesirable. However, the question arises: is this due to poor employee management, or to labour market and structural factors? Previous research has certainly pointed to impoverished employment practices (Kelliher and Johnson, 1987; Price, 1994), and an industry that suffers from a negative image as an employer has the potential for natural bias in any study within its workplaces.

The researcher's reflection on a long period as practitioner as well as student of the industry, confronting assumptions arising out of personal experience, was important in the development of the philosophical approach to the study. This process encouraged a methodological stance that guarded against bias created by value-laden assumptions, as will be detailed in the Methodology chapter. To further support an examination of the issues from an open-minded perspective, the researcher explored conceptual frameworks and research methods seldom applied to the hospitality industry's labour turnover challenge. A positivistic and normative research design has dominated the literature emanating from hospitality industry studies, preoccupied with measurement and assessment of the impacts of labour turnover and proposing alternative solutions. The researcher became attracted to a more exploratory and qualitative position, leading to an epistemological stance connected to people's experiences, feelings and ascribed meanings (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe, 2002: 28-33). This approach was deemed compatible to a desire to understand and gain insight into the turnover intentions of employees regarding future job change.

The process of reviewing literature was beneficial in this regard, as perceptions were increasingly influenced by research carried out within the service sector, but undertaken by those from cognate disciplines outside of the service operations or hospitality management domains. These alternative perspectives were accounts of research by academics such as sociologists (e.g. Marshall, 1986; Korczynski, 2002, 2003), and cultural or social anthropologists (e.g. Mars and Nicod, 1984). These perspectives and epistemological positions raised the possibility of alternative approaches to the subject area and prevent parochialism within the traditional service sector and hospitality industry's predominantly normative and practitioner-oriented literature.

1.3 Contextual considerations

The service sector workplace taken as the setting for this study's field-work is the hospitality industry. This industry is highly competitive and labour-intensive. Storey notes that as with other service organisations, hospitality has been the subject of an increasing number of industry-specific human resource studies and publications (Storey, 2007: 4). There has certainly been a rapid increase in the publishers' lists of text books specifically dealing with the hospitality industry and its workforce issues (Wood, 1997; Brotherton, 2000; Hoque, 2000; D'Annunzio-Green et al. 2002; Van Der Wagen, 2003; Lucas, 2004; Boella and Goss-Turner, 2005; Baum, 2006; Nickson, 2007). Although greatly dependant on the performance, commitment and interpersonal behaviour of the employees, the service sector in general, and the hospitality industry in particular, have been criticised for inadequate people management practices (Purcell, 1993; Price, 1994; Ogbonna and Harris, 2002;

Ritzer, 2007). The hospitality industry is characterised by its high labour turnover rates (Wood, 1994; Deery and Shaw, 1999; Lashley and Rowson, 2000). Employee turnover is a key index of the effectiveness of an organisation's human resource policies (Vandenberg and Nelson, 1999; Morrell et al, 2001). A central theme of this thesis is that labour turnover in service work may be understood more deeply by exploring the cultural interrelationships and cohesion between employees, organisation and customer.

Much of the previous research into the hospitality industry's human resource and the labour turnover issue has been set within a framework of hospitality operations management research, concerned with isolating causes, assessing the effects and recommending management action for improvements (Johnson, 1981; Wood, 1992; Manley, 1996; Deery and Iverson, 1996). The need for further study and for alternative intellectual approaches, such as from a social science perspective, has been highlighted by others in order to enrich our understanding of the hospitality industry (see Guerrier and Deery, 1998; Lashley, Lynch, and Morrison, 2007). The framing of the issues in this study has been influenced by an important ethnographic study of hotel restaurants by cultural anthropologists Mars and Nicod (1984), who pointed to the relationship between the prevailing organisational culture and the patterns and nature of labour turnover. A more recent study of labour turnover and culture within the hospitality industry is that reported by Deery (2002), which refers to the existence of a labour turnover culture itself, an almost inevitable feature of the sector, stoically accepted by management (see also Wood, 1994).

Deery and Shaw (1999: 387) specifically note that there has been little research into the relationship between culture and employee turnover. It is a contention of this thesis that it is necessary to understand better the relationship between organisational culture and labour turnover within a customer-service enterprise, so that scholars and practitioners may develop new approaches to the staff retention, employee commitment and performance challenges of service industries. The thesis makes its contribution to knowledge by giving an account of research undertaken within the licensed retail sector of the hospitality industry. More precisely the study is set in the English public house which is in itself an important social space in everyday life (Bennett and Watson, 2002). The primary research will be informed by analysis and understanding of the literature pertaining to organisational culture, exploring the overlapping connections to contemporary human resource management models and practices, and specifically addressing the relational implications for labour turnover in the hospitality industry.

1.3.1 Hospitality industry context

The hospitality industry is a major economic and social phenomenon, employing nearly two million people in the UK and valued at around £40 billion in terms of its contribution to the UK economy (British Hospitality Association, 2006). It is an industry of nearly 270,000 businesses, of which 85% employ 10 or fewer employees (Lucas, 2004). Employment is readily accessible by people of all ages and skills. Lucas (2004) reports the workforce profile to be 62% female, 57% part-time, 30% of its workforce being under 24 years of age, and comments that it is the industry with the highest labour turnover levels in Britain at 48% per annum. Trade union

membership density is very low at around 5% of the workforce (Brook, 2002). Bell (2007) refers to its role in economic and urban regeneration.

Lashley and Morrison (2000: 15) point to the industry being based essentially on a relationship, a service encounter, between host and guest, whether in the social, private or commercial domain. Within the commercial hospitality industry, that relationship is between employee and customer set within an organisation, together constituting the three points of a service triangle (see Korczynski, 2002). The hospitality industry has been classified by commentators as being heterogeneous, with many sizes and types of business, located in many different places but close to its markets, consumption being undertaken at the point of sale (Medlik, 1978; Lucas, 1995; Van Der Wagen, 2003).

Brotherton (2000) refers to the industry as highly competitive, with many products and services on offer within many different environments. He considers that the principal variables affecting the industry's success are management practices, industry structure, operational systems, the societal demand for products and services, the physical environment, work patterns and employment practices and external factors such as legal, financial and information technology developments. A major outcome of structural importance to the industry and to this thesis is the increasing domination of multi-site chains of national and international operations (Jones, 1999; Goss-Turner and Jones, 2000; Ritchie and Riley, 2004). The licensed retail sector in particular has seen a transformation of its structure in this regard,

facilitated by the techniques of corporate branding and replication of successful brand concepts (Preece et al, 1999; Knowles and Egan, 2002; Pratten, 2005).

In reviewing the hospitality literature published during the past three decades, it is striking that a consistent theme in research output and commentary is reference to underlying employment problems. Medlik (1978: 186) describes an industry with a series of problems, “in relation to employment policies and practices.” He further comments that the industry is noted for its, “unsophisticated selection methods, the high labour turnover and lack of formal training.” Wood (1997) highlights challenges such as low wages, poor working conditions, exploitation, minimal job security and labour turnover problems. He describes an industry with workforce characteristics such as low trade union activity and low density membership; large numbers of part-time and casual workers; large numbers of female and young workers relative to other sectors; many migrant workers; and many different occupational communities.

Walsh (2000) refers to the workplace pressures placed on front-line staff in terms of interpersonal skills. Hinkin and Tracey (2000) highlight staff turnover levels as the major factor in service quality problems. Apart from the industry average of 48% labour turnover reported by Lucas (2004: 33), the licensed retail sector is noted as having much higher levels, in excess of 180% per annum (Lashley, 1999). Such levels compare unfavourably with national turnover rates in other sectors, the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (C.I.P.D.) reporting that national

rates of labour turnover across all economic sectors averaged at 26% in 2000, 16% in 2002 and 15% in 2004 (CIPD, 2001, 2003, 2005).

The important economic role of the sector within a developed service economy can be visually assessed in the high streets of towns and cities across the country, as branded chains of restaurants, fast food outlets, pubs, bars and coffee shops have become established and replicated (Jones, 1999; Bell, 2007). These strongly branded hospitality units are created with specific consumers in mind, aiming to offer products and services that meet the needs and are in line with values of the targeted customer (Knowles and Howley, 2000; De Chernatony and Cottam, 2008). As a result, the hospitality industry provides a rich locus for research into organisational culture and human resource issues within a customer service oriented situation. However, there has been a lack of research output in the area, exceptions being work by Watson and D'Annunzio-Green (1996), Iverson and Deery, (1997) and Ogbonna and Harris, (2002).

1.4 Academic considerations

Certain influential strands of literature have pointed to a relationship between the prevailing organisational culture and the incidence of labour turnover. Underpinned by the literature of sociology, anthropology and cultural theory, a number of studies have been undertaken within different sectors of the hospitality industry and its workforce, exploring the cultural identities of the service provider, of the service receiver, and the organisational setting (e.g. Whyte, 1948; Mars, 1973; Marshall,

1986). Mars and Nicod (1984), in an ethnographic study (employing participant observation methods) of hotel restaurants, perceived restaurants as social systems, as examples of the linkages of patterns and cultural rules. They concluded that the culture of the organisation had significant influence over the employee's propensity to stay or leave. Iverson and Deery (1997) note that high labour turnover had a negative impact on the cohesion of the organisation's culture, whilst Deery and Shaw (1999), consider the existence of a labour turnover culture, affecting the behaviour and attitudes of management and staff. Such findings influenced the basis of the proposal for this study, and helped to form the research questions and objectives for the study as a whole. Such questions were embraced by a motivation to discover different approaches to the labour turnover challenge within service work and the hospitality industry.

A conceptual 'map' or plan guided the structure of the literature review. The first body of literature to be reviewed is that surrounding organisational culture, considering the different interpretations of the concept, such as structural-functional or social anthropological, a dichotomy which has fuelled much debate and argumentation as to its true nature and meaning (e.g. Meek, 1992). The review continues by examining important commonalities with the developing, contemporary models and practices of human resource management (HRM), particularly those HRM approaches connected to employee commitment and stability of the workforce (Legge, 2005: 217). Such managerial interventions form a major part of the manifestation and reinforcement of the culture espoused and desired by the organisation.

The linkages between culture, HRM and employee commitment are considered along with how commitment is frequently a major variable affecting the employee's intention to stay or to leave their job. Specific workforce issues and dilemmas inherent in service work and the hospitality industry are evaluated and the labour turnover phenomenon is considered with particular reference to organisational culture and the service encounter triumvirate of organisation, employee and customer. The resulting research questions, refined following the literature review, are addressed by primary research within the licensed retail sector of the hospitality industry. This is undertaken by a case study investigation across two brands of a major national chain of pubs, bars and restaurants, utilising qualitative research methods, which will be discussed in detail in the Methodology chapter.

Before turning to the detail of the literature review, an outline of the completed thesis is summarised by chapter headings.

1.5 Summary of chapters

Chapter 1 Introduction

The introduction to the thesis outlines the personal, contextual and academic considerations that have influenced the formulation of its overall objectives. The chapter introduces the specific context of the hospitality industry, in which the primary research took place, and its relevance to a study of culture and labour turnover.

Chapter 2 Organisational Culture

This chapter offers a review of the literature within the domain of organisational culture, exploring the different conceptual and epistemological interpretations. The chapter reviews the debates that have characterised the application of the concept of culture to organisational life as a whole, and the service sector more specifically. At this point, the thesis particularly explores divergent perspectives regarding the meaning of culture in organisations, from the anthropological concern with differentiated sub-cultures to the structural-functional idea of a strong, unitary corporate culture. It is indicated that the subsequent methodological approach to the field research has been significantly influenced by the *grid / group* model of cultural analysis as developed by Douglas (1982).

Chapter 3 Organisational Culture and Human Resource Management

This chapter traces the linkages between the concurrent developments of the concept of organisational culture and the practices of Human Resource Management (HRM). This part of the literature review considers the influences of academics and practitioners from the United States and United Kingdom on the culture / HRM relationship. The relationship between culture and contemporary notions of managing people is explored with particular reference to the goals of organisational performance, employee commitment and workforce stability. Specific consideration is given to the hospitality industry's employment characteristics and the HRM challenges faced by the industry.

Chapter 4 Labour Turnover, Service Work and the Hospitality Industry

This chapter offers a review of models and theories of labour turnover, contextualised by consideration of the characteristics of service work, the hospitality industry and the branded licensed retail sector. Specific characteristics of service work, especially the notion of service cultures and the relevance of the concept of emotional labour, are revealed as being elements of a cultural and social setting that have impact on the labour turnover intentions of employees, in particular the so-called intention to quit. Alternative approaches to the theory of labour turnover are considered, including the labour market school, the psychological school and the emergent proposition of the existence of a labour turnover culture.

As this is the final chapter drawing directly on secondary research, the chapter ends with a summary of themes that have arisen from the literature review as presented in Chapters 2, 3 and 4. These themes are then reflected in a refinement of the aims and the research questions for the study prior to consideration of the methodological approaches adopted.

Chapter 5 Methodology and Research Methods

This chapter reviews the ontological, epistemological and methodological considerations that have resulted in the particular research methods adopted for this study. Research developments within the hospitality industry and the licensed retail sector are outlined. The chapter introduces the case study company and the two

brands in which primary research took place, and outlines the methods of data capture and analysis.

Chapter 6 Research Findings

This penultimate chapter presents the findings from the field-work in terms of qualitative data from the interviews with employees within the case study company and data retrieved from company documentation. A structure for the reporting of the findings, based on the data analysis, is outlined, and the narrative is illustrated with extracts from the employee interviews. The experience and perceptions of the employees in both brands are considered against key themes from the literature review in order to gain insight into the workplace culture, workplace relationships and the employees' intentions regarding their employment. The commonalities and the differences in the employees' perceptions of their workplace, work group and employment intentions provide a prime means of gaining insight into the relationship between organisational culture and labour turnover.

Chapter 7 Contribution to Knowledge

Finally, based on the findings and results analysed from the field-work for this study, a set of conclusions regarding new insights into the relationship between organisational culture and labour turnover in service work are outlined. It is concluded that labour turnover intentions of employees in service work is affected by their perceptions of the relative alignment between the cultural characteristics of the

brand, the employee, and the customer. The contribution to knowledge is extended to theoretical considerations and practical applications in order to demonstrate the wider applicability across the service sector of a cultural alignment model, and the significance of the findings for organisations, managers, researchers and students.

This thesis introduction now gives way to the first of the literature review chapters, Chapter 2, a review of the literature within the domain of organisational culture.

Chapter 2

Organisational Culture

2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews literature underpinning the concept of organisational culture, the debates and intellectual critiques that have accompanied the rapid development of interest in the concept. It also examines the growing body of work seeking to interpret implications for management and organisations. The subject area is notable for the number of issues that arise; there is debate over the nature of the concept itself and the elements that constitute the concept; whether organisational culture and climate are one and the same; whether organisational culture and corporate culture are one and the same; whether culture can be created and changed by management; and to what extent the concept of organisational culture and the models of human resource management are linked. This chapter will trace and analyse many strands of debate and the variety of different epistemological perspectives and assumptions about organisational culture.

At the core of the debate are two opposing positions (Smircich, 1983). One position considers culture to be an integrative force, presenting management with the possibility of creating a strong and unitary ‘corporate’ culture that can control and guide behaviour and commitment in the employees (e.g. Deal and Kennedy, 1982). The opposing position denies this integrationist interpretation of culture and denies that management can truly change culture as if it were a variable because a culture is

formed by social interaction within the organisation, as differentiated sub-cultures of employees develop their own assumptions and meanings (e.g. Martin, 1985). The review in this chapter will consider variations between these two extreme positions, proposing that culture, organisations and employees may be subject to elements of both interpretations.

It is proposed that the managerial interpretation of organisational culture has important implication for the policies and procedures implemented in the management of people within a particular organisation. Such implications will be considered within the specific context of service sector work and the nature of employee commitment. The literature reviewed reveals that employee commitment to the organisation is a key aspect of the linkage between organisational culture and the management of human resources. It becomes clear that employee commitment is a critical component of the relationship between organisational culture and workforce stability and that low commitment is frequently a precursor to low levels of employee retention.

2.1 Concept of culture

As organisations are socially constructed entities, consisting of structures, individuals, and groups of individuals required to interact and behave in particular ways, it is not surprising that the influence of cultural theory and anthropological approaches have been significant. Simpson (2001: 113) stresses the organisation's cultural and social anthropological components: "rules, values, ideologies, strategies

and objectives which are enacted in practice on a daily basis and which have varying degrees of impact upon those who come into contact with them.” Culture itself is subject to many different definitions and interpretations, often dependant upon the scholastic and ideological position of the person addressing the issue. Meek (1992) points to the origin of the idea of culture being firmly within the domain of anthropologists and sociologists, more recently adopted and adapted by organisational theorists and management consultants. The concept of organisational culture was liable to be a mixture of contradictory approaches as different theoretical approaches selected (“borrowed” according to Meek, 1992: 194) a conceptual paradigm that most supported a particular perspective. The spur to this borrowing of parts of a concept is mooted as a response to economic downturn and increased competition in the latter part of the 20th century, Meek stating that “the preoccupation with organizational culture is probably related to socio-economic factors in Western society” (1992: 192).

The different approaches (epistemologically and methodologically) in the attempts to define culture and the theory of culture are seen as a strength by Geertz (1973). In his defence of a highly interpretative approach to the theory of culture, he delights in the notion that the more that culture is analysed through ethnographic means, the less complete it seems to be; “What gets better is the precision with which we vex each other” (Geertz (1973: 29). To exemplify the dilemma of cultural definition Geertz (1973: 4-5) summarises the uncertainty by referring to the work of Kluckhohn (1951), a noted commentator on cultural theory. Geertz points out that Kluckhohn outlines no less than eleven variations on a definition of culture within twenty-seven

pages, ranging from “a way of thinking, feeling and believing”, to “a theory on the part of the anthropologist about the way in which a group of people in fact behave”, to “learned behaviour.” It is possible that such lack of precision and such a range of meanings and interpretations gave rise to the criticism of the ‘highjacking’ of the concept of culture by management consultants and organisational leaders of the 1980’s. They were attracted by the unitary and consensus notion rather than the underlying principles, selecting and implementing those ideas which matched a management prerogative (see Martin, 1985).

The purist approach to cultural theory is connected to the social anthropological tradition of structural-functional theory, founded on the seminal work of Emile Durkheim (1933) and the idea of “collective consciousness”. This concept of society is based on the premise that each member of that society is socialised into its common culture by having the skills to be able to survive within that common culture. Culture is viewed as a system in which structures and relationships create specific behaviour patterns, forming a social cohesion (Burns, 1999). Members of that culture possess a common understanding of the structures (‘cosmology’) and regulations (‘social facts’) within which they operate. They are also aware of the moral codes and approaches that form behaviour and actions (‘social forces’). The relevance to contemporary debates about cultures within organisations stems from Durkheim’s societal-level concepts of structures, of institutions with formal and informal rules, and the morality issue which leads to a collective symbolism consisting of values, ideals, opinions and mythologies (see Edgar and Sedgwick, 2002). The structural-functional tradition is relevant to the ‘strong’ and integrated

culture approach, the integration paradigm seeking a collective consensus and cohesion (Smircich, 1983; Meek, 1988; Legge, 2005).

Giddens (1984) echoes the concepts of Durkheim in his theory of structuration. In this model, society consists of a duality in terms of the internal skills and competence of the individual and the rules of the social structure in which they form relationships and act. This societal competence is expressed verbally through discourse, but also in the individual's consciousness, so that the routine of everyday societal life (such as employment) is expected, anticipated, giving order, meaning and what Giddens refers to as 'ontological security'. If this security is shattered by the unexpected, the impact is disturbing.

2.1.1 Social anthropological approach

A significant development in the latter half of the last century has been the application of the tenets of anthropology to organisations and business within society. The area of study has been called both social anthropology, predominantly in Britain, and cultural anthropology, predominantly in the United States (Burns, 1999: 18-19). The anthropologist seeks to understand a culture by observing the behaviour and interaction of the individuals within a social structure or social system, often at the interface between the organisation and the individual (Gellner and Hirsch, 2001: 4). In this way, organisations are seen as cultures in their own right, set within a particular social system. The culture and the social system (or in a managerial

context, the organisational structure) are distinct but inextricably linked, needing to be understood as entities themselves but entities which interact constantly. In order to help this understanding, the work of Clifford Geertz is significant and instructive.

Geertz (1973: 144) puts it thus:

“One of the more useful ways—but far from the only one—of distinguishing between culture and social system is to see the former as an ordered system of meaning and of symbols, in terms of which social interaction takes place; and to see the latter as the pattern of social interaction itself.”

Within this quotation lies the assertion of Geertz that culture is a study of the individual and the group, set within a cultural and a social setting which will, through interpretation, allow us to understand the behaviour and its meanings. Here it can be seen that there is compatibility between this generic approach and the contextualised situation of an organisational life; employees as the individuals and the work groups, set within a highly structured social setting, the workplace. Geertz emphasises that it is the behaviour of individuals and groups, how they ‘act’, that is of paramount importance in a study of culture. Echoing the work of Weber, Geertz writes (1973: 5):

“Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning.”

By studying cultural behaviour, interpreting the signs, a particular vocabulary is needed, not one based on positivistic approaches to structuralism, but an ethnographic account described in terms of integration, symbol, ritual, ideology, and ontology. Thus Geertz (1973: 14) develops his ‘semiotic concept of culture’:

“As interworked systems of construable signs (what, ignoring provincial usages, I would call symbols), culture is not a power, something to which social events, behaviours, institutions, or processes can be causally attributed; it is a context, something within which they can be intelligibly—that is, thickly---described.”

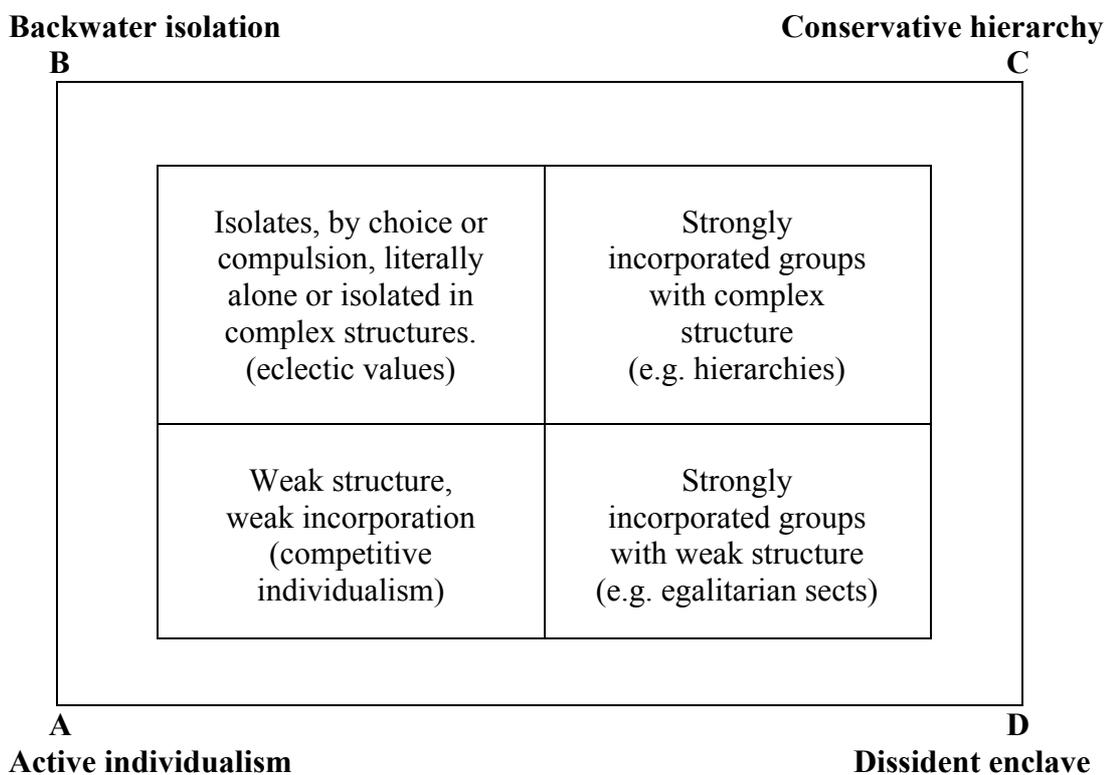
This theoretical construct by Geertz rejects the more structural-functional view that culture is a positivistic power for realising the desired unitary consensus, a causal factor that can change the way people behave (as proffered in the 1980's by such as Deal and Kennedy, 1982 and Schein, 1985). In this opposing interpretation, culture is concerned with the development of meaning, behaviour and other cultural signs and symbols which occur within the context of a social system; in the case of organisations, within the workplace and within the groups of workers.

2.1.2 Grid and group analysis

The work of the social anthropologist Mary Douglas has had a significant bearing on research undertaken within service work and the hospitality industry (Mars and Nicod, 1984; Houghton and Tremblay, 1994; Cameron, 2001). Douglas (1978; 1982; 1996) develops a model of cultural theory that is, like Geertz, based on ethnographic study of social entities through observation and description. It identifies specific dimensions by which the social entity may be analysed and better understood. A fundamental principle is that individual members of groups and communities desire a community that works effectively towards some form of ideal life, “every aspect of living and all choices are tested in the struggle to make a cultural ideal come true” (Douglas, 1996: 42). Douglas identifies four types of culture (see Figure No. 1 below) which map the links between culture and behaviour, and which address the

issues of the interrelationships between individual and group, and between individual and social entity. Within the domain of organisational and corporate culture studies, this is interpreted as the interrelationships between worker, work group and workplace.

Figure No. 1 The Cultural Map



Source: Douglas (1996) p. 43.

The cultural map model presents a means of categorising culture types; it is dynamic as well as descriptive, and gives the opportunity of understanding more deeply the issues faced by groups and individuals within very different contexts, and clearly points to the fact that a particular type of culture requires particular conditions in which to develop: the *conservative hierarchy*, dominated by formal rules and

structures, typified in the world of business by bureaucracy and Fordist, compliance-based processes, is the antithesis to the *dissident enclave* where equality and spontaneity flourish; *active and competitive individualism* is a culture type which would be hostile to both the formal hierarchy or the anarchic egalitarian scenario, and would find it impossible to deal with a *backwater isolation* culture type, where any of the controls and constraints of the other cultures are to be avoided. For the study of organisations the Douglas model also affords a means of highlighting structures that form the basis for a particular type of culture and behaviour, the degree of incorporation determining the behaviour, identity and values of the members (Caulkins, 1999).

The concept of the cultural map is itself based on the earlier model of Douglas (1973, 1978, 1982), known as *grid* and *group*, an analytical approach to the dimensions of culture. Douglas considers culture to be concerned with three dimensions. Firstly, ‘cosmology’, the broad concepts and explanations that people attribute to the world around them and their place in that world (echoing Durkheim). Secondly, ‘classification’, the way people categorise the elements, the objects of their world, how they see their world. Thirdly, ‘social values’ or the ‘pattern of values and beliefs’ which are shared by the members of the group. The summation of these three aspects manifests in the rituals, language, communication and signs which form a type of restricted code that, “enables a given pattern of values to be enforced and allows members to internalize the structure of the group and its norms in the very process of interaction” (1973: 77).

This approach to cultural theory aims to link the underlying beliefs that people hold about their world to the forms of social order and the types of human relations they experience. This approach leads to the *grid* and *group* model. *Grid* is the extent of social constraint and regulation, the constraints put on people and how they form relationships, such as in particular workplaces and jobs, a hierarchy of classification and of order. This *grid* (as illustrated in Figure No. 2 below) is a vertical continuum. At one point of the continuum, strong *grid* represents highly ordered and classified roles and status, institutionalised rules and rituals which are shared as it were publicly by the members of that society, organisation or group. At the other end of the continuum, weak *grid* refers to a system in which the individual is freer to negotiate relationships with others, more autonomous, able to be creative in an absence of rules, a private rather than public classification valuing autonomy and individuality.

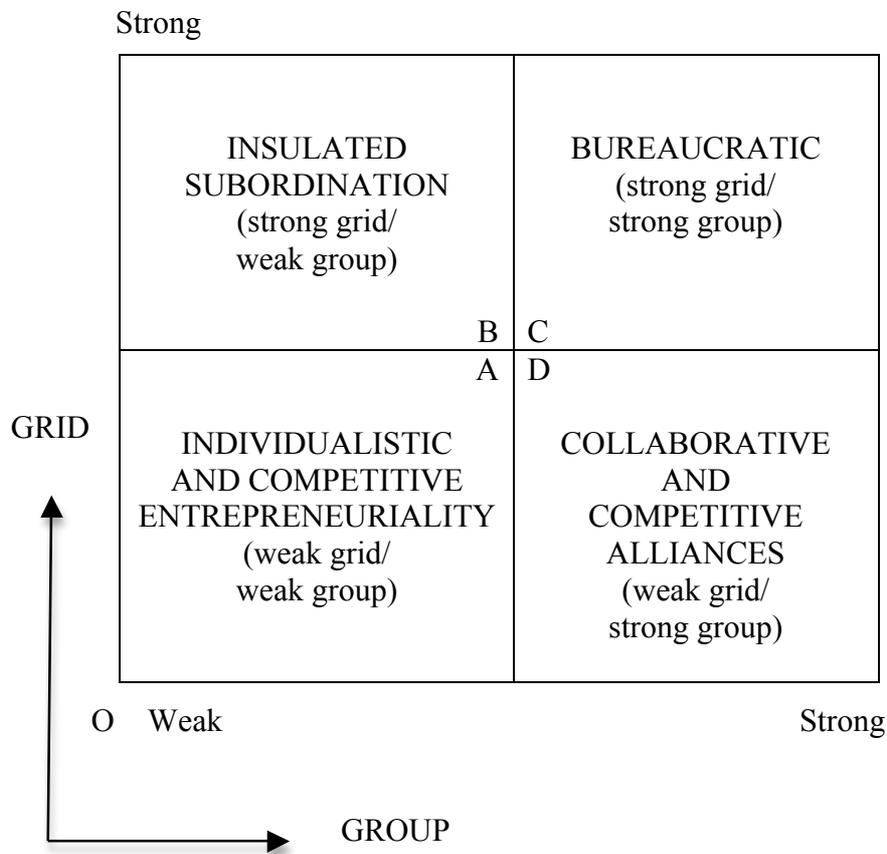
Group is a dimension of group involvement and commitment. Considered along the horizontal line of the diagram below (Figure No. 2), *group* refers to the strength of the group's boundary, the extent to which a member of a particular group is enabled, pressurised and controlled by the other members. An individual's behaviour and identity is thus shaped to a greater or lesser degree by being a member of the group (Caulkins, 1999). Mars and Nicod (1984: 125), in their application of the Douglas model to the hotel industry, refer to *group* as, "the strength or weakness of people's associations with one another in the workplace." In strong *group* cultures, the members display a strong sense of belonging to the group, and individual interests are subordinated to those of the group. The stronger the *group* culture, the more solid

are its boundaries and it develops its own exacting regulations on those wishing to join the group and become a member. The members of the group want to spend as much time as possible together, which in the workplace can be linked to employees who not only work together but also spend leisure time together. This strong *group* culture endorses a differentiated, sub-culture approach to organisational culture (see Martin, 1992). Douglas developed the notion of a ‘small group culture’, a social system characterised by members who know each other very well, and who mistrust members of other groups:

“The group boundary is the main definer of rights: people are classed either as members or strangers” (Douglas, 1973: 169).

Douglas adds that there is some level of competition for power within such a small group, there are prospects of promotion, but leadership of the group is precarious. There is implication for individual loyalty and commitment within the group, the group needing to be together for some time to know each other well enough for such ‘small group’ characteristics as belonging and association to develop. In such situations, fragmentation of work groups due to high levels of labour turnover will lead to weaker relationships. More recently, Legge (2005: 217) considered that, “it is impossible to build a strong corporate culture without stability of membership.”

Figure No. 2: Grid and Group Analysis



Source: Mars and Nicod (1984) p. 126.

At the other end of the *group* horizontal continuum, weak *group*, lies the dimension where the ego of one individual becomes powerful and influential to the point where, for example, one member exerts significant power and control over the other members. This member could be interpreted as a highly competitive company chief executive or entrepreneur whose personal drive, ambition and self-centred focus exploits the employees, and is thus free from group coercion and constraints (the ‘Big Man’ as described by Douglas). In his study of the occupational culture of chefs

Cameron (2001) found that award-winning chefs, even when working in essentially bureaucratic hotel organisations, considered themselves autonomous from group pressures, including the sub-culture of senior management attempting to implement a particular type of corporate culture.

This taxonomic approach to cultural theory offers a significant analytical framework within which to understand different types of culture. For example, an organisation with strong *grid* and strong *group* will have a high degree of classification, ritual, sets of rules and routines, and hold its symbols and mission with great reverence. There will be strong and moral coercion on group members to conform. Such a combination might be a bureaucracy where there is low personal autonomy, and in contemporary business may be typified by the global corporate institution which standardises its products and services and requires a strong, classified culture to support it:

“It is axiomatic that a steady pattern of control is needed for a coherent system of classification.” (Douglas, 1973: 86).

The *grid* and *group* method of analysis affords a powerful basis for examination of work cultures. Its application and usefulness as a tool for analysis within the hospitality industry is exemplified by the work of Mars and Nicod (1984), which will now be discussed.

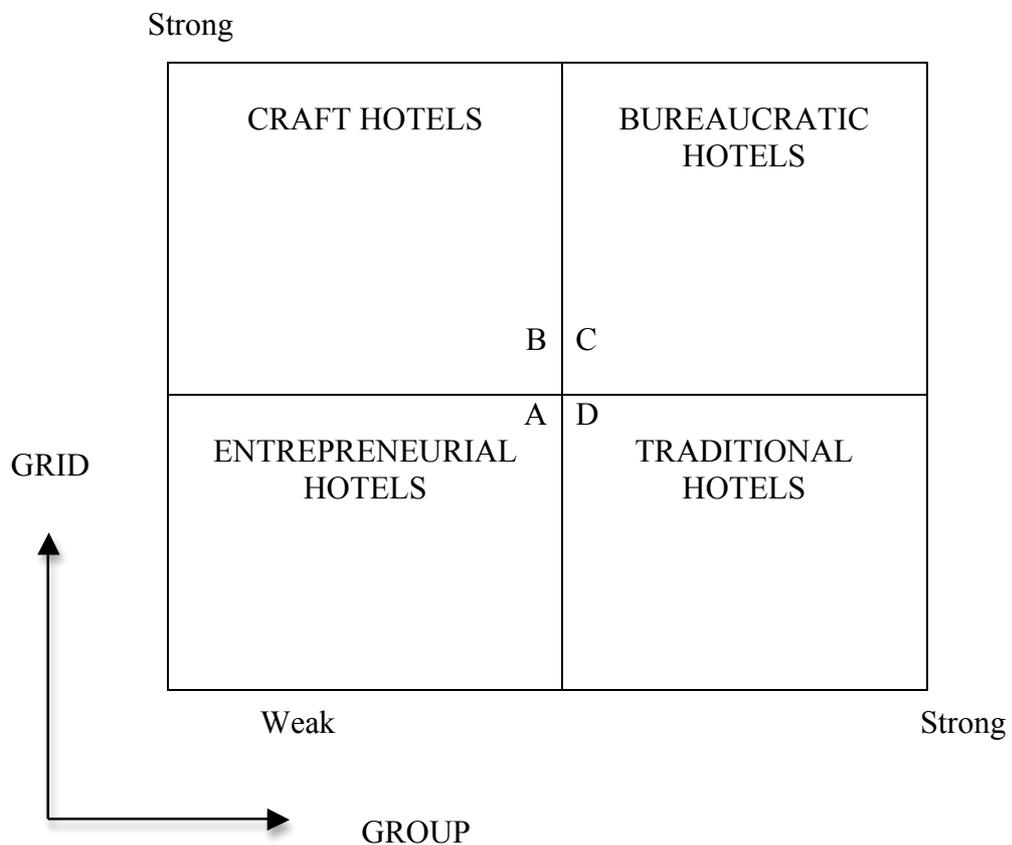
2.1.3 Grid, group and hotels

Mars and Nicod (1984) conducted extensive ethnographic research within UK hotels via participant observation and plotted the work cultures of the different types of hotels against the Douglas *grid* and *group* model (see Figure No. 3). Strong *grid* and strong *group* characterised the large, bureaucratically organised chain hotel where structures were highly developed, work groups were interdependent, where communication was formal, and where employees aimed for high position and status within the organisation. Weak on *grid* but still strong on *group* were the independently operated hotels, much less concerned with structures and systems, but where the work group, often 'living-in' together as well, formed a strong and cohesive sub-group, where work and non-work relationships were closely linked (as with Douglas' strong *group* culture). Weak *group* but strong *grid* was found in the independent and luxury market, where there were very ritualised, classified rules and systems, such as how to behave with wealthy customers. However, employees were more concerned with their own personal advancement than with loyalty and association with any work group.

Finally, Mars and Nicod referred to entrepreneurial hotels, weak *group* and *grid*, where a dynamic and influential owner operator (a 'Big Man' in Douglas' terms), encourages a competitive and innovative environment and develops a personal loyalty from individual workers to him or herself, rather than to the organisation or the work group. This typology has significant implications for the study of organisations, their dominant cultural type and the nature of their sub-cultures or

work teams. This includes service sector organisations such as the licensed retail sector, characterised by small work groups, set within large, multi-site brands. The contention of Mars and Nicod that the prevailing culture impacted upon the pattern and nature of labour turnover within each hotel restaurant was noted in the construction of the methodological approach to the field-work for this study.

Figure No. 3: Classification of Hotels by Grid and Group



Source: Mars and Nicod (1984) p. 127.

A further influence on the methodological approach of this study has been the anthropological framework adopted by Mars and Nicod (1984: 3) for their study that

guided their attempts to describe and understand hospitality employees and interpret their behaviour. Their framework was based on the methods of recruitment and initiation of individuals into the workplace culture; the power relationships within the workplace that exercise social controls; the relationships inside and outside the workplace group; and the ideology shared by group members. In this way, Mars and Nicod were able to apply the interpretative cultural description approach of Geertz as well as the *grid* and *group* theory of Douglas within the hotel restaurant organisation.

2.2 Meanings of organisational culture

The literature regarding the development of the concept of organisational culture is sometimes notable for its desire to cite simplistic definitions, normally followed up immediately with highly conjectural and divergent analyses of what turns out to be a significantly complex and ambiguous entity. Porter, Lawler and Hackman (1975: 489) give us an early one-liner: “Organizational ‘culture’ is a set of customs and typical patterns of ways of doing things.” In similar vein, Deal and Kennedy (1982: 59) argue a strong correlation between behaviour and organisation values and structure: “Strong culture companies communicate exactly how they want their people to behave.” Legge (2005: 222) notes the oft-used definitional phrase of ‘it’s the way we do things around here’ as typifying the work of Deal and Kennedy. In ensuing writings, as summarised in this section, the complexities are dissected and the ambiguities revealed. The anthropological influence, for example, encourages us to consider culture more as a system of sub-cultures, symbols and meanings. This interpretation of culture leads to an epistemological dichotomy between approaching

culture as something an organisation ‘has’ or something an organisation ‘is’ (Smircich, 1983).

2.2.1 Culture or climate

Ambiguity over meanings and definitions is a feature of the writings and research concerning culture, both in its widest theoretical sense as we have seen, and in its organisational form. To begin to answer the ‘what is organisational culture’ question, it is firstly necessary to consider the difference between the terms organisational culture and organisational climate. One rationale for separation of these terms is based on the academic perspective from which an organisation is assessed, whether from a sociological or from a psychological discipline (McGregor, 1960; Field and Abelson, 1982; Graves, 1986). Graves (1986) provides an insightful analysis, and confirms that the subject of organisational climate emanates more from a psychological perspective, concerned with the day-to-day feelings and perceptions of the individual and work group, subtle behavioural manifestations between employees reflecting attitudes and a psychological climate. Graves cites Margulies and Raia (1978: 13-14) and their observations that organisational climate is like a weather barometer, changing daily with the experience of work, whereas culture, “develops and changes slowly over time.”

The latter description of culture is endorsed by Dastmalchian, Blyton and Adamson (1991: 33), in comparing culture with attitudinal climate, and yet acknowledging the important connection:

“For us, the attitudinal climate in an organization is one contributing factor to the organizational culture which in turn represents a more general set of beliefs and way of working that (usually) develops over a relatively long period and is fairly resistant to short-term pressures.”

Again, Dastmalchian et al (1991) refer to climate being concerned with a shared perception, whereas culture is more concerned with shared values, beliefs, meanings and assumptions. Climate is likely to impact on culture, in that an individual's attitude and perception may influence the work group, and as such, climate can be seen as operating at the individual level, whereas culture normally operates at the organisational level. Dastmalchian et al (1991:49) emphasise the interrelated nature of the two concepts, usefully adopting a meteorological metaphor for climate and an anthropological metaphor for culture.

In a similar analysis, Davidson (2003: 207) cites the work of Denison (1996) and concludes that, “Climate research takes a snapshot of what is happening but culture research looks to deeper underlying reasons.” Davidson concludes that ‘climate’ is none the less important within the service industry due to the demand for ever improved customer service, requiring an appropriately convivial atmosphere at most times. Whilst an examination of culture rather than climate is central to this thesis, it must be noted that climate, when juxtaposed with the need for service workers to display emotions and behaviour that sustain the conviviality, is an important factor and consideration of the related concept of emotional labour will be addressed later in the thesis.

2.2.2 Sources of organisational culture

The notion of organisational culture as the way people behave acceptably 'round here' implies that it is the managers of the organisation as a social structure who determine what is acceptable, in a concensus-seeking, unitary entity. Meek (1992) critiques the idea that leaders create and develop cultures, a popular theory of the 1980's, highlighted by the work of Peters and Waterman (1982), Kilman (1982) and Schein (1985). Meek considers such an assertion as totally contradictory to the principles of social anthropology which contends that culture, "emerges from the collective social interaction of groups and communities" (Meek, 1992: 198). Meek finds much more persuasive explanation in the work of Burrell and Morgan (1979), Morgan (1980; 1986), Giddens (1982) and Smircich (1983), favouring the anthropological premise that individuals create culture through their social interaction, through their sharing of meaning and beliefs, and through the forming of sub-cultures with compatible values and behavioural characteristics. Culture is developed and then reproduced over time. It is founded on underlying, shared assumptions which give "ontological security" as defined by Giddens (1984). Such a premise is enhanced by a group with stability of membership in order for the culture to develop and subsequently reproduced, a situation which may be difficult to satisfy in the high labour turnover sectors of service work.

Legge (1995: 221-232) concurs with the more descriptive anthropological approach, but suggests that the work of Schein (1984; 1985) is relevant as it may still be possible for managers, leaders, "to reshape the manifestations of culture", but not

change the underlying and most fundamental assumptions of the individuals and the group within the organisation. The latter point is important with reference to Schein's concept of culture based on three levels from the outward and visible artifacts (surface level), to a second level of espoused and manifest values that govern behaviour and to a third level of underlying and embedded assumptions. The 'corporate' sub-culture in the organisation that is formed of senior managers has a specific opportunity and power to influence to some extent aspects of all three levels.

2.2.3 Divergent perspectives

The literature surrounding organisations and the application of culture concepts reveals clear divides between schools of thought, each viewing the subject through a different theoretical lens. There is a largely managerial, practitioner or consultancy approach which considers that culture can be managed and changed by business leaders (e.g. Kilmann, 1982; Schein, 1985, 1992a, 1992b) and there is a more critical and anthropological tradition which attempts to explain the deeper meanings and theories denying that it can be managed by organisational leaders (e.g. Martin, 1985; Meyerson and Martin, 1987; Meek, 1992; Smircich, 2002). Still other commentators consider that there may be elements of an organisation's culture and employee behaviour which can be affected by management, even if the behaviour and assumptions are not fully internalised by the employees (e.g. Ogbonna and Wilkinson, 1990; Ogbonna and Harris, 2002). Ogbonna and Harris (2002) classify the three positions as 'optimists' (managers can create and change culture), 'pessimists' (managers cannot create and change culture) and 'realists' (managers

may have some influence on culture). Ogbonna's own position was established within the predominantly 'pessimist' persuasion, critical of managerial attempts to change culture (Ogbonna, 1993), but later concedes that certain organisational values may be affected, in line with the realist position (Ogbonna and Harris, 1998).

These different approaches are of significance to the analysis of culture and organisations, and will be considered in more depth later within this chapter because each approach has implications for the organisational relationships between employer, employee and, particularly within the service sector, the customer. The retail sector study by Ogbonna and Wilkinson (1990) is apposite in this regard. The customer, invariably present in the service encounter, is affected by the behaviours and attitudes of the employee. The 'optimists' believe that those employee behaviours, considered by managers to be appropriate for business success and customer satisfaction, can be created and introduced by the organisation and its management through a strong and unifying culture. In this setting, employees share certain values and reproduce desired behaviours, through rituals and through language (Legge, 2005: 220-221). This integrative paradigm has been aligned with the structural-functional philosophy (Meyerson and Martin, 1987), with the use of the term 'corporate culture', and with the so-called 'excellence' literature of Peters and Waterman (1982), Deal and Kennedy, (1982), Kilmann (1982), and Kilmann et al, (1985). It is also much critiqued as another mechanism introduced by management to control worker behaviour and thus reinforce the hegemony of management and corporate culture over the employees (Ogbor, 2001).

Ogbonna's 'pessimists' consider that organisational culture is formed by the social interaction of individuals as employees and work groups or sub-cultures. These individuals share and relate their experiences, their codes of behaviour and level of commitment emanating from underlying assumptions and beliefs, rather than directions and cultural diktats from management (Martin, 1985; Meek, 1988, 1992; Anthony, 1990; Ogbonna, 1992; Blyton and Turnbull, 1992; Willmott, 1993; Ogbor, 2001). Van Maanen (2001: 244) expresses the academic critique of the 'pessimists' in the following observation:

“In some organisations, upper-level managers studiously work up explicit cultural values that are trickled down to the ordinary folks in the operational trenches, who are presumed to then take their social and behavioural cues from their betters.”

Van Maanen, as with many anthropologically orientated commentators, doubts the effectiveness of a corporate culture that can be “posted to a wall” (2001: 244). However, Van Maanen also concedes that it cannot be denied that management may be able to influence culture and behavioural manifestations (the ‘realist’ position), and agrees with writers such as Ogbonna and Harris (1998), that some influence may be exerted through interventions such as cultural change programmes. The fact that so many managers and organisational leaders believe that employee behaviour and commitment can be influenced by very costly cultural management and change programmes is significant in itself. Such managers are convinced of a winning cycle of an integrative culture that leads to higher commitment, higher productivity and higher profits (Martin and Frost, 1999). The debate around these divergent perspectives points to the need for practitioners to develop a deeper understanding

and analysis of the theories and concepts of culture, as well as its organisational setting before determining the most appropriate organisational culture.

2.2.4 Culture as a variable or a non-variable

An important contribution to the understanding of culture and the links to organisational behaviour is the seminal analysis by Smircich (1983). She draws on the work of Burrell and Morgan (1979) in considering a concept of culture as a variable, something which a social structure or organisation ‘has’. It is a set of cultural factors which can be controlled, changed, or manipulated by corporate interventions. This can be likened to the work of cultural consultants who utilise the work of the ‘excellence’ writers of the early 1980’s (Peters and Waterman, 1982; Deal and Kennedy, 1982), in line with the notion of reshaping corporate culture and behaviour for the improvement of corporate performance.

Smircich (1983) contrasts this approach with a directly opposing epistemological position which determines that culture is something which an organisation ‘is’, (the ‘root metaphor’ analogy, p. 353), that it is about individuals in groups producing and reproducing a set of shared meanings and behaviours which emanate and are enacted from their social interaction. It can be argued that this approach, an interpretive paradigm, with its significant implications for research methodology, is rooted in the discipline of social anthropologists, concerned with the cultural complexity of socially constructed entities, the communities or groups within it, and the individuals

which make up those groups. The latter approach mitigates against a ‘top-down’ declaration by management seeking compliance with its desired cultural change, “making up new ways for people to be” (du Gay, 1996:133), and proposes an alternative direction in which social cohesion develops.

The ‘realist’ position would seek the middle way in this polarised account. Such a position accepts that management can exert some meaningful degree of influence over culture and behaviour in the workplace. Houghton and Tremblay (1994) examine this position in the hospitality industry of the mid-1990’s. In their application of *grid* and *group*, the existence of ‘strong’ brands, highly standardised and prescriptive in terms of operation resulted in inflexible approaches to staff and customers, staff being required to follow very exacting standards of performance in both technical and interpersonal competencies. Whether the employee commitment subsequently manifested is due to superficial behavioural compliance or is based on embedded underlying assumptions and belief is at the heart of the debate.

The debate over culture as a variable or not, and the general level of ambiguity is summarised effectively by Van Maanen (2001). He describes culture from his social anthropological perspective as an abstraction that cannot be observed or studied directly, “since the term ‘culture’ does not denote any concrete reality” (2001: 238). At one end of the organisational culture literature spectrum it consists of managerial, consultancy, practitioner-based understanding aimed solely at improving the organisation’s performance and enterprise. At the other end of the spectrum it is

viewed by those with more academic, theoretical concerns, seeking a deeper meaning and understanding (Barley et al, 1988; Meek, 1988, 1992; Knights and Willmott, 1987; Sackman 1991; Mabey and Salaman, 1995).

2.2.5 Commonality in approaches to organisational culture

Although the concept of culture within organisations is ambiguous and difficult to define, there are features and characteristics within the various definitions that occur and re-occur, often within the broad understanding that culture is a system of publicly and collectively accepted meanings and behaviour operating for a given group at a given time (Trice and Beyer, 1984). It is this strong sense of integration and of unifying the social structure which pervades much of the literature, and which led many to consider culture as the means of gaining coherence and consistency across the organisation. There is an emphasis on the relationship between culture and patterns of behaviour that have been transmitted by symbols and espoused values (Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, 1961; Ouchi, 1981; Child, 1981). There is a further emphasis on the norms and values, the beliefs and attitudes that are encouraged and ultimately shared by the members of the organisation (Van Maanen and Schein, 1979; Schwartz and Davis, 1981; Louis, 1981). The integrative approach, stressing the sharing aspects of cultures is summarised effectively by Morgan (1986: 128):

“Shared meaning, shared understanding and shared sense-making are all different ways of describing culture. In talking about culture we are really talking about a process of reality construction that allows people to see and understand particular events, actions, objects, utterances, or situations in distinctive ways.”

This approach stresses the holistic nature of the culture concept, which Ogbonna and Harris (2002: 34) summarise in this useful definition:

“...the collective sum of beliefs, values, meanings and assumptions that are shared by a social group and that help to shape the ways in which they respond to each other and to their external environment.”

This definition covers both the outward manifestations of culture within organisations as well as the more embedded level of assumptions. It also points to the notion of the ‘social group’ (or perhaps ‘work group’ in organisations). The dichotomy between the more academic, organisational culture theorists and the more practitioner, corporate culture proponents hangs on the way in which the social group is said to form and develops its beliefs, values and assumptions. In Morgan’s idea of culture as reality construction, it is the extent to which the reality is constructed by management, and how much builds itself through social interaction in the workplace. It is important for management to understand both the external and symbolic manifestation of culture and the significance of embedded underlying assumptions for a true insight into workplace culture. In this regard, the workplace group or team is a social group of importance as a sub-culture within the organisation. In exercising its power to influence culture and behaviour, management needs to be aware of the difference between a commitment based on resigned behavioural compliance and one based on deeper, underlying belief.

2.3 Development of the corporate culture concept

The essentially anthropological work of academics such as Geertz (1973) and Douglas (1973) continue to provide frameworks for analysing the nature, ambiguities and characteristics of the concept of culture. The relatively recent preoccupation with discourse and debate around ‘corporate’ culture hails from the early 1980’s as managers and researchers, faced with the global competitiveness, enterprise and technological changes of the late 20th century, saw such a concept as a new way of achieving harmony, control and high performance within the organisation and workforce (Ogbor, 2001: 590-596). Corporate culture initiatives and cultural change programmes were seen as a solution to contemporary challenges, and culture as something possessed by an organisation, and therefore liable to managerial intervention. The importance of understanding the relationship between organisational life and culture emanated from the economic crises of the 1970’s and 1980’s, bolstered by the metaphor of the organisation as a mini-society with a culture and sub-cultures (Morgan, 1986):

“Just as individuals in a culture can have different personalities while sharing much in common, so too with groups and organizations. It is this phenomenon that is now recognized as ‘corporate culture’.” (Morgan, 1986: 120-121)

Some commentators prefer to distinguish between the more academic approach to organisational culture with the more applied management consultant field of corporate culture. Mabey and Salaman (1995: 286) link the corporate culture tradition with organisational performance and human resources strategy (HRS), referring to “the managerialist, consultancy approach to organisational cultures—corporate culture.”

For Hofstede (1991), the conceptual dichotomy developed by Smircich provides the key to the distinction; the ‘has’ definition “leads to an analytic approach and a concern with change. It predominates among managers and management consultants. The ‘is’ supports a synthetic approach and a concern with understanding and is almost exclusively found among pure academics” (1991: 180). It can be seen that Hofstede also polarises the debate still further between Ogbonna’s optimists (managers and consultants) and pessimists (academics), whereas Mabey and Salaman provide a more realist position, interpreting corporate culture in a more positive framework as being linked to organisational issues and to human resource management (HRM) as the set of policies and practices for managing the workforce.

In light of the divergence of epistemological perspectives on organisational culture, there is a possibility that contemporary academic reviewers of the literature might reject the preoccupation of managers and consultants with corporate culture as managerial fad, lacking the depth and intellectual rigour of an anthropological approach to the concept of culture. This is perhaps too convenient a position. As Anthony (1994) has remarked, in line with Van Maanen (2001), whilst purist academics may scoff at the superficial analysis of culture in some corporate culture literature and research, there is no point in overlooking the importance of corporate culture as perceived by practitioners in organisations. The fact that leading companies allocate significant resources to employee programmes that include a corporate culture dimension is testament to the importance given to the subject area in the ‘rational’ and ‘economic’ minds of executives. This is borne out by Storey (2007), who details comprehensive and hugely expensive HR and culture strategies

introduced recently by successful service businesses such as the John Lewis Partnership and Tesco. Van Maanen (2001: 245) considers that if managers really were purely rational and economic in their outlook in business, then they would not be concerned with, “matters such as custom, myth, ceremony and ritual.” Morgan (1986) states that corporate culture will vary from one organisation to another, but is clear on its importance:

“Such patterns of belief or shared meaning, fragmented or integrated, and supported by various operating norms and rituals, can exert a decisive influence on the overall ability of the organization to deal with the challenges it faces.” (Morgan, 1986: 121)

However, corporate culture has also been subject to popularist press ‘soundbites’ which in turn encourage potential academic invective, such as, “the glue that holds organisations together” (Graves, 1986: 149). It has been characterised as being a ‘fad’, or ‘craze’, both terms used by Hofstede in his book, “Cultures and Organizations—Software of the Mind” (1991). Hofstede himself gives a somewhat limited definition of corporate culture in a re-working of his own broad definition of culture in general: “Consequently ‘organizational culture’ can be defined as the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one organization from another” (p. 180).

It could be conjectured that the degree of influence created by the corporate culture writings deserves a more detailed analysis, although Hofstede does grudgingly admit that, “Fads pass, and this one, too, may be out of fashion one day, but not without having left its trace” (1991: 179). That trace would appear to have at least partly consolidated its mark within the field of contemporary models of human resource

strategy and human resource management, with corporate culture management, employee commitment and performance seen as main planks of the model.

The development of the corporate culture phenomenon is critical to understanding the overlapping and interconnected domains of organisational culture and human resource management, including the significance of employee behaviour and commitment. In its various forms, as we shall consider later, commitment level is a strong indicator of an employee's intention to leave employment, an influential predictor of, or precursor to, labour turnover (Porter et al 1974; Allen and Meyer, 1990; Meyer and Allen, 1991; Guest, 1992; Morrell et al, 2001, 2004). The inter-relatedness of culture and HRM provides a balanced view of corporate culture as a whole, echoing Storey's model of culture being a 'key lever' for the implementation of HRM policies and practices (Storey, 2001: 7-8). In his model, corporate culture is perceived as capable of developing and facilitating consensus, flexibility and commitment across the workforce.

2.4 Classifications and explanations of corporate culture

The relationship between culture and contemporary management of people and organisations provides an apposite context for discussing and explaining the phenomenon of corporate culture. Mabey and Salaman (1995), in a review of strategy and human resources, classify corporate culture into four discernible types: firstly normative and prescriptive corporate culture; secondly integrative corporate

culture; thirdly corporate culture based on beliefs and values; and fourthly corporate culture as “a family of concepts” (1995: 287).

2.4.1 Normative and prescriptive corporate culture

The normative, prescriptive typology refers to definitions that clearly link the strength of the culture and its ability to influence behaviour and performance in a strictly managerial perspective. The imputation is that if management gets the culture right, then worker behaviour, commitment and effort will be directed appropriately and the organisation will be successful. This approach was the major theme of Kilmann et al’s 1985 book, “Gaining Control of the Corporate Culture”, identifying culture as a controllable variable. However, this approach suffers from a lack of verifiable research, and at best, as suggested by Ogbonna and Wilkinson (1988), the result may be resigned compliance rather than deeply felt commitment, a critical distinction when considering employee loyalty and potential turnover intention. Mabey and Salaman (1995) consider Schein’s work (1992a) as central to this managerial approach, a functional and instrumental interpretation regarding the survival of the organisation:

“the pattern of basic assumptions that a given group has invented, discovered or developed in learning to cope with its problems of external adaption and internal integration, and that have worked well enough to be considered valid, and therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to these problems.” (Schein 1992: 237)

Schein’s work has also provided more depth to the awareness of underlying meanings and assumptions. His model of the three different levels of corporate

culture draws on the more mainstream anthropological work of such as Geertz and the latter's distinction between culture as meanings and symbols within which interaction takes place and structure as the pattern of the interaction itself. Schein's work points to the outward, surface-level manifestations of culture, those aspects of behaviour which can be orchestrated such as office lay-out and dress code, referred to as 'Artifacts and Creations' by Schein (1985). However, it also refers to the second tier of culture, the values that influence behaviour, and finally, the underlying and basic assumptions which in a subconscious, taken for granted manner, embed themselves within the employee.

Schein also recognises the importance of the sub-culture within organisations, echoing the importance of the sub-structure and small group culture within organisations. Managerial actions seek to impact on Schein's three levels in varying degrees of intervention; employee induction and training may be adapted to introduce the dominant codes and patterns of behaviour to instill the attitudes deemed appropriate; the organisational structure will reinforce such approaches and the reward systems duly compensate for appropriate employee actions; and periods of stability in approach will contribute to the internalisation of perceptions into the everyday work relationships and communications. Legge (1995) synthesises this managerial aspect of Schein's model with a more anthropological approach:

“Schein goes on to make the point that a culture only exists in the context of there being a group to 'own' it, defined as a set of people who have been together long enough to have shared significant problems, to have had the opportunity to solve those problems and observe the consequences, and who have taken in and socialized new members.” (Legge, 1995: 223)

In this statement Legge begins to shape our thinking and help our development of the links between organisational culture, commitment and labour turnover. A precondition emerges, namely the need for a period of sustained employment within the group members, socialisation beginning at the induction stage of recruitment, jointly experiencing the challenges of the work and, as a team, reflecting and reacting to the consequences. The links to contemporary HRM practices now begin to become apparent. The argument is being built that high labour turnover and the subsequent continuous fragmentation and instability of the work group can put such cultural development at risk.

The implication for groups in the workplace is important, specifically for the cohesion of that group and the codes or classifications (symbols, rituals) developed by the group (following the Douglas *group* and *grid* model). With regard to patterns of labour turnover there is the implication that the lower the rate of turnover, the more potential for a developed and cohesive work group and workplace culture. Instability within the work group does not only affect worker performance and decrease productivity, but threatens the continuity of the basic assumptions and the behavioural and attitudinal codes and classifications developed.

2.4.2 Integrative corporate culture

The second area defined by Mabey and Salaman is the integrative role of corporate culture. Within a given industrial and socio-economic context, managers determine

and develop a system of ideology for the organisation. They seek to build a set of beliefs, values and norms that are shared by the members of that organisation. Shared meanings and accepted codes of behaviour are reinforced by the symbols, the semiotics of the organisation, through such means as ritual, myth, stories, mission statements, logos and language. The integrative notion is that all members of the organisation will share the cultural characteristics, will believe and espouse its virtues, and that this sharing is the basis for a strong and successful, enterprising corporate culture and in turn of a strong corporate performance. The sharing of values, meaning and understanding, the so-called ‘strong’ cultures (Peters and Waterman, 1982; Peters, 1987; Kanter, 1989) are deemed to have a positive effect on integration of the workforce and ultimately its performance and success. It is possible to be sceptical of the veracity of this argument in that it is difficult to provide empirical proof of this integration / performance equation. Meek (1992: 197) is critical of a narrow conceptualisation of culture and comments on the difficulty of validating:

“The idea that culture is the collective will of the organization—its personality, an invisible force or the organization’s soul—is a metaphysical explanation of behaviour and events that are impossible to observe.”

There is also concern (see Saffold, 1988; Arnold, 2005) that if a strong culture is too rigid, the ‘sharing’ of that culture will lead to resistance if the control system on the members is overly oppressive. The comparisons with high *grid* classification systems in Douglas’ model are again apparent, such as the highly formalised bureaucracy, wherein behaviour is so regulated that creativity and innovation are repressed, and considered as unwanted, disruptive initiatives within such an ordered system. High

labour turnover in some tightly standardised service operations, including the fast food sector, has been attributed to such over-controlled cultures and businesses (Ritzer, 1996). Such sharing of integrative values may also be so entrenched that any need to change or adapt to new societal and economic environments, may be difficult and divisive.

Discussion of corporate culture in its integrative form also resonates with the often articulated aim for HRM to seek consensus, commitment, flexibility and high performance (Storey, 2001). The cultural characteristics of the organisation and its members will present a significant impact on such an ambition. There is the additional challenge within multi-site companies, such as those that dominate the service sector, of how shared cultural meanings can be replicated across many different locations and business units. This can lead to a culture in which remote senior management in head office attempt to obtain cultural consensus through, “powerful signals sent from corporate offices, often in covert form, of what is expected, rewarded, sanctioned, permitted and prohibited” (Purcell and Ahlstrand, 1994: 168). Purcell and Ahlstrand’s analysis of the multi-divisional company suggests that achieving an integrative and strong corporate culture within a multi-site hospitality business such as a licensed retail brand may be made even more difficult when the problems of high labour turnover are added to the challenge of attempting to establish a ‘strong’, integrated corporate culture across many different geographical locations. However, the need to try to achieve consistent brand standards and customer service approaches across many locations is a powerful

driver for management, causing them to espouse certain characteristics of a strong culture, such as mission, purpose and values.

2.4.3 Values and corporate culture

Mabey and Salaman's third explanation of corporate culture types is based on the significance of the values, beliefs and assumptions underpinning the culture. The concept of human values is an area of study that cannot be dealt with in detail within the parameters of this thesis. However it occurs so frequently in the corporate culture literature that some consideration of key aspects as they pertain to corporate and organisational culture is appropriate. Many organisational leaders pronounce frequently on the subject of the values of the company and its employees. That said, the level of understanding about the development of beliefs and values is limited and may be merely part of an attempt to manipulate or dominate the workforce (Keenoy and Anthony, 1992; Alvesson and Deetz, 1999) and promote those values which take into account the targeted customer (du Gay and Salaman, 1992).

Much of the literature, whether normative or integrative, considers the desirability of a 'fit' between individual values and organisational values as part of a composite model of culture (Eldridge and Crombie, 1974; Cummings and Huse, 1989), and in HRM terms of how this forms the so-called psychological contract between employers and workers (Lucas, 2004). Arnold (2005: 229) puts it thus: "Perhaps the ideal is a supplementary fit between person and organization for values and culture",

a suggestion endorsed more recently by Bellou (2009). Eldridge and Crombie refer to a “unique configuration of norms, values, beliefs, ways of behaving and so on, that characterise the manner in which groups and individuals combine to get things done” (1974: 78). Harrison (1972, 2000) links values to his cultural typology in terms of the underpinning of the desire for achievement, where members feel empowered by identifying with strongly goal-oriented values.

This is relevant to the hospitality industry where there resides a competitive and success-oriented ethos, where management seeks to instill its employees with the potentially contradictory values of exceptional customer service to every customer, alongside organisation-oriented cost-minimisation and efficiency (Korczynski, 2002, 2007). Leidner (1993) refers to the comment of a supervisor in the McDonald’s fast food chain, stating in serious tones that service staff must aim to treat all customers as individuals, but in less than sixty seconds. This encapsulates the dilemma for service workers and the potential for conflicting values, contradictory role objectives, and high stress levels. In understanding the orientation of people and organisations towards certain values, Mabey and Salaman (1995: 293) offer a cultural values framework that follows the work of Child (1981) and Bate (1992). Child (1981:327) identifies five value orientations, indicating organisational characteristics and exemplars of management practices resulting (Figure No. 4 below).

Figure No. 4: Cultural value orientations and organisational characteristics

Examples of relationships postulated between cultural value orientations and organizational characteristics

<i>Value orientation (>=stronger than, or preferred)</i>	<i>General organizational characteristics</i>	<i>Examples of specific practices</i>
1 Human nature: good > evil	Emphasis on subordinate autonomy and intrinsic motivation	Subordinate goal-setting; job enrichment
2 Man to nature: mastery > subjugation	Policies of innovation, and of developing individual expertise	Support of venture management; positive exercise of strategic choice including active negotiation of boundary conditions with external groups
3 Time orientation: future > past	Strategic emphasis and long-term planning; formal schemes for formal organisational socialization and career planning	MBO approach rather than budgetary control; use of manpower planning and assessment centres
4 Orientation toward activity: being > doing	Human relations philosophy; emphasis on interpersonal sensitivity; interest in social as well as economic and technical criteria in work organization	Management style high on consideration relative to initiating structure; organizational morale and climate included in performance monitoring
5 Relationships: individual > hierarchical	Minimization of hierarchy; emphasis on delegation and participation; control through assessment of achievement rather than through insistence on conformity to rules	Amenities and fringe benefits not differentiated by status; employees deal directly with members of public (where relevant) without referral upwards

Source: Child (1981) p. 327.

In support of Child's model and the view that organisational behaviour is affected by organisational culture, Bate (1992) provides a framework for cultural orientations and values based on how people relate to each other at work and of the impact on performance. Based on his own empirical research Bate identifies six elements which shape organisational cultures, and which influence the values and orientations that underpin the relationships. Figure No. 5 illustrates how these cultural responses relate to specific organisational issues.

Figure No 5: Organisation issues with cultural responses

<i>Basic organization issues</i>		<i>Cultural responses</i>
1	How emotionally bound up do people become with others in the work setting? (Affective orientation)	Unemotionality
2	How far do people attribute responsibility for personal problems to others, or to the system? (Animate-inanimate orientation to causality)	Depersonalization
3	How do people respond to differences in position, role, power and responsibility? (Hierarchical orientation)	Subordination
4	How far are people willing to embark with others on new ventures? (Change orientation)	Conservatism
5	How far do people chose to work alone or with and through others? (Individualist-collective orientation)	Isolationism
6	How do people in different interest groups relate to each other? (Unitary-Pluralistic orientation)	Antipathy

Source: Bate (1992) p. 232.

The affective orientation refers to the degree of emotionality between people at work, how emotionally close are the group members, the cohesion of the group, “the degree of intimacy, disclosure of self and feelings” (Bate, 1992: 232). The closeness and cohesion of work group members features in much relevant literature (as with Douglas) within the subject area of organisations and culture: the anthropological importance of social interaction and sub-cultures; the strong culture of shared values in the corporate interpretation of structural-functionalism; and the so-called ‘soft’ HR

goals of employee commitment and performance through a committed workforce. The affective orientation, and the values held by individual members within that group may therefore be very significant in the cultural cohesion of a work group.

The animate-inanimate orientation in Bates' model is particularly relevant to those working in large, multi-site organisations where systems and other members, such as executives in remote head offices, may have a disruptive impact on group members in the front-line workplaces. This reflects the *group* dimension at the left hand side (weak *group*) of Douglas' model, where 'others' increasingly exert pressure on the group, as opposed to the group members exerting pressure on each other. This is also reflected in the third orientation, that of hierarchical issues, concerned with the power distance, status and role aspects of organisations, often associated with varying levels of *grid* classification systems (see also Hofstede, 1991). The change orientation is particularly relevant to Bate's work in cultural change and problem-solving, concerned with the willingness of people to change or to resist change, whilst the individualist-collectivist orientation roots itself firmly in the values that people place on working in groups rather than being isolated, alone. Finally the unitary-pluralistic orientation returns to the basic question of how people relate to each other in different groups, with different priorities and interests, and has implications for HRM models in terms of the search for consensus across the different groups of organisational members, and the premise of much corporate culture literature that concensus and sharing values is a key aim.

Bate's approach is without doubt extremely useful in classifying a range of value orientations within the work group. It provides insight into how individuals might react to particular situations and circumstances. However, like other models within this domain, it does not fully address the service work 'triangle' of organisation, employee and customer, bound together in a transaction of consumption. In this service encounter, three 'sets' of values meet at the focal point of the encounter. There are the values of each employee and of the values of the work group in which the employee is a member; there are values espoused by management to the employees in an attempt to reflect the wider organisation's values and beliefs; finally, there are the values of each and every customer. The branded licensed retail sector, which will be the focus of the fieldwork for this thesis, is a graphic example of this complexity. Pub staff, for example, working in small shift teams comprising both full-time, part-time and temporary employees, are oriented towards the organisational standards and values of the specific brand of pubs. They also have to serve a range of very different customers possessing a range of values themselves. In some pubs those customers may be of different social classes, may be younger or older, drinkers or diners, shoppers, tourists or business executives, pre-theatre customers or late night 'clubbers'.

2.4.4 Family of concepts explanation of corporate culture

The fourth corporate culture type suggested by Mabey and Salaman (1995) leads us to the idea of culture being more disparate and unclassifiable. They refer to the work of Pettigrew (1979) and his notion of "a family of concepts, all of which have their

use: symbol, language, ideology, ritual, belief” (1995: 287). This is based on the idea that whilst values may be shared by some organisational members, they may not be shared by all members and indeed that different sets of values may dominate different sections of the organisation (see also Trice and Beyer, 1993). This again relates to the sub-cultures that develop their own sets of meanings and ways of relating to each other. These contrasting sets of values and sub-cultures within an organisation may be positive or negative, but reflect the view that given groups may have different meanings and values at any given time. As with Meek’s commentary, the assumption that cultures always provide a consensual solution is not necessarily correct. However, this fourth approach is supported by Meek (1992: 205) in terms of corporate culture, as in cultural anthropology studies, there is a concern with a number of elements or components, on a variety of levels, a “family of concepts” including symbols, myths, ideologies, rituals, language, knowledge, assumptions, cognitive systems and frameworks.

The idea of a family of concepts is useful as it avoids the doubtful certainty of normative or integrative approaches that are empirically unverifiable. However the proposal does need some guidance or classification for practitioners to enable them to understand its implications within an organisation, particularly in the complexity of the service encounter. It is argued that the work of Martin (1992) is instructive in this regard and has important consequences for service firms. Martin rejects the integrationist approach in favour of a form of family of concepts, a more differentiated concept. She begins with a basic assumption that there is a plurality of cultures and sub-cultures within organisations (such as occupational groups), and

that each sub-culture reflects different experiences, different backgrounds, habits, education and training. This differentiated approach allows the organisational culture debate to accept the involvement of a range of sub-cultures, not one easily identified, all-embracing culture within which all members or employees share the same values, beliefs and assumptions. These sub-cultures exist and operate in conjunction with the more formal management organisation and structures (Noon and Blyton, 2007: 385).

This interpretation accords more readily with the hospitality industry, characterised by an organisation comprising of many small work groups, potentially many sub-cultures. Hotels, for example, employ many occupational sub-groups organised in work teams, including teams of chefs, restaurant staff, bar staff, receptionists, porters, housekeepers, sales and reservations staff, engineers and accountants. Martin also considers that an extension of the differentiated type of culture could be described as fragmented, where there is little or no consensus and sharing of values and beliefs, not even within a sub-culture. Redman and Wilkinson (2001: 242) consider this situation as, “contradictory and confusing cultures battling for the soul of the organisation as well as those of its employees.” Martin (1992) believes that the three cultural conditions of integration, differentiation and fragmentation, may be present at the same time in different parts of the same organisation. This model, more than most, illustrates the ambiguity concerning culture and highlights the difficulty and spuriousness of declaring that an organisation ‘has’ one type of culture or another. It is also helpful when considering the features of a multi-site hospitality firm, frequently employing different occupational groups, in different geographical locations, often employing different ethnic groups, employees of different values,

backgrounds and education, some full-time, others part-time and temporary in employment status.

2.5 Conclusion and chapter summary

This review of the literature focused on the subject of organisational culture has revealed a contentious domain, intriguing in its breadth of study and in divergent approaches. These approaches may be traced to the epistemological assumptions and perspectives derived from structural-functional, sociological and anthropological interpretations of the concept of culture. From such different beginnings it is apparent that three distinct positions have emerged; firstly organisational culture as an integrative 'corporate' culture, a unitary, strong entity designed by corporate leaders who have the ability to manage and change the culture; secondly organisational culture as a more differentiated set of sub-cultures where the culture is determined by meaningful social interaction of members and not managed and changed from the corporate level; and finally organisational culture which recognises that the corporate management of an organisation has some influence over culture but at a somewhat superficial level, leading to resigned compliance rather than a commitment borne out of embedded beliefs and shared underlying assumptions.

The significance of all three perspectives is that the nature and form of the organisational culture is seen to have impact on the behaviour, attitudes and commitment of the workforce. Yet such relationships are far from easily verifiable

and, for example, there remains conjecture as to the true relationship between culture and employee commitment, and the nature of such commitment. Employee commitment within a unitary corporate culture emphasises commitment to the organisation and its goals. There are considerable constraints and controls on behaviour. There is a relatively strong *grid* in the Mary Douglas typology. Within a more differentiated, sub-culture framework, employee commitment emphasises the strength of relationships within the workplace, a stronger *group* position.

The Douglas model of *grid* / *group* is concluded by the researcher to be a powerful and highly relevant framework for an exploration of organisational culture and the links to employee behaviour including labour turnover behaviour. The *grid* dimension addresses the question: ‘how should I behave?’, relating to external constraints and power affecting the employee, especially in a hierarchical situation (Caulkins, 1999: 110). The *group* dimension gives insight into identity (‘who am I?’), into status and the boundaries between the group(s) and the wider organisation (Caulkins, 1999: 111). These issues are critical in service work, as noted by Korczynski (2002), where the service worker attempts to meet the efficiency demands of the service organisation bureaucracy as well as fulfil the expectations of the customer seeking exceptional service quality. The Douglas model will be a crucial influence and element of the methodological approach to the primary research for this study.

Different types of organisational or corporate cultures have been identified but there are certain characteristics which are common; the need for the sharing of beliefs and values, for the sharing of meanings and assumptions, for the cohesion of the culture to develop over time, becoming stronger as individuals form ever closer associations. Such a position requires stability of the workforce. Stability and connected themes such as staff retention and labour turnover are in part connected again to the matter of employee commitment. The degree of commitment, as shall be explored in Chapters 3 and 4, is an important factor, a precursor, in determining an individual's intention to stay or leave a job. Stability of the workforce is a particular challenge for service industries and the hospitality industry is seriously affected by labour turnover rates far in excess of other sectors and frequently cited as damaging to service quality and customer satisfaction.

The context of the service sector also presents an additional dimension to consideration of culture, organisational life, employee behaviour and commitment. That additional element in service work is the customer. It has been noted that models concerning culture and the analysis of culture need to be applied to the service work context, and that the customer's 'role' in that scenario requires inclusion. In the main, the culture literature related to organisations maintains a focus on those managers and employees who interact in sub-cultures and work groups. In service work such as the hospitality industry, the customer intrudes on this 'mini-society' to use Morgan's analogy. The organisation and the employees may well have constructed some form of reality as culture, however fragmented, which has been created and may be sustained. However, in organisations like branded licensed

retail chains, where production, service and consumption are simultaneous and inseparable, the customer is present and an active player in that reality.

As will be discussed in the next chapter, the perceived outputs of organisational culture such as appropriate employee behaviour, high commitment and in turn high performance, are also major linkages to contemporary models of human resource management, thus forming a significant bridge between the organisational culture concept, models of HRM and the phenomenon of labour turnover. The organisational role of strategic HRM and the development of the concept itself has been intimately connected with culture, and its perceived effects on workforce behaviour, commitment and performance in the drive for success of the enterprise.

Chapter 3

Organisational Culture and Human Resource Management

3.0 Introduction

This chapter seeks to explore the linkages between the concept of organisational culture and the development of human resource management (HRM), and the resultant contemporary practices affecting the management of people at work. There is a chronological framework to this literature review, tracing these strongly associated developments since the early 1980's, and a contextual element in terms of the hospitality industry's specific concerns regarding the management of its workforce. This chapter also considers critical aspects of the relationship between organisational culture and HRM with particular reference to the twin aims of employee commitment and workforce stability.

As organisational culture became a preoccupation with practitioners, consultants and academics in the early 1980's, another conceptual development, that of human resource management (HRM), became energised and increasingly linked to culture. This is perhaps not surprising as the culture debate within the normative, integrative and prescriptive models of the 'excellence' writers such as Peters and Waterman (1982) placed great emphasis on the behaviour and competencies of the workforce. Within the narrative of such authors the workforce is given the highest priority as a critical component in the future commercial success of the organisation within a

globally competitive and fast-changing environment. Tyson (1995) effectively summarises the inevitability of the realisation that the culture concept provided HRM with an opportunity to develop and assert its significance:

“From the HRM perspective, the organisational culture argument was attractive. The belief in organisational cultures was based on the assumption that the ‘culture’ was the most significant determinant of worker behaviour.”
Tyson (1995: 44).

As noted in the work of Salaman (2001), the inter-connection between culture in organisations, and the development of HRM policies and practices emanates from the managerial perspective that competitive advantage could be created by the employees. This would be achieved through the employees’ commitment, their behaviours and actions, and their embodiment of the firm’s values within the organisation and in their customer interactions, particularly within the growing service sector. Managers and researchers took the view that key features of organisational culture could be significantly influenced by the activities of HRM, from recruitment and selection to training and development, all geared to the aim of shaping worker behaviour and commitment. As Tyson comments: “this was good news for HR managers” (1995: 45).

3.1 The HRM context

Over the past three decades the term ‘human resource management’ (HRM) has gradually entered the language and discourse of everyday business life. Employees refer to their ‘HR’ department when needing to resolve an employment issue; many organisations have re-named their previously entitled ‘Personnel’ office to fall in line

with the trend to use the HR label, and job titles have also been radically overhauled to reflect the contemporary approach (Armstrong, 2001; Torrington, Hall and Taylor, 2002; Beardwell, Holden and Claydon, 2004; Kersley et al, 2005; Redman and Wilkinson, 2006; Storey, 2007). The publication “People Management”, the journal of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), regularly contains an appointment section of around thirty pages of management job vacancies in the function, few carrying the job title of Personnel Manager any longer. Most roles are described in HRM terms, whether HR Manager, HR Director, or HR Advisor.

A review of the past 15 editions of the “People Management” appointments pages reveals the increasing movement towards specialist roles within the discipline, senior HR positions where the job-holder requires to be a significant expert in fields such as reward and recognition, employment relations, learning and development, training, and the management of cultural change. The spread of the influence of HRM into more strategic matters such as cultural change and overall organisational performance is typified by the ‘business partnering’ models of Ulrich (1997, 1998) and Ulrich and Brockbank, (2005). Consequently contemporary HRM is conceptualised by some in terms of an array of highly specialised services closely aligned to business strategy and planning, far removed from the role expected of the personnel management department of the past.

3.1.1 Development of HRM

Within the latter part of the 20th century there has been a sustained increase in research and publication in the field as HRM became linked with strategy, culture and workplace relations. Increasingly HRM was viewed by practitioners and scholars as critical to the understanding and potential success of enterprising organisations. A driver in the debate over the meaning of HRM were seminal works from specific schools of thought in the United States (e.g. Fombrun et al, 1984; Beer et al, 1985). There followed a decade of significant output from researchers and writers in interpreting and debating the concept within a more UK-centric context (Guest, 1987, 1990; Tyson and Fell, 1989; Sisson, 1990; Noon, 1992; Salaman, 1992; Beaumont, 1992; Blyton and Turnbull, 1992; Storey, 1995; Beardwell and Holden, 1997; Sisson and Storey, 2000).

The late twentieth century provided a backdrop of fast and significant change, driven by economic and technological developments, changing product and labour markets, global markets and competition, and, in the developed economies, the increasing dominance of the service industries (see Nolan and O'Donnell, 1991; Lashley, 1997; Redman and Mathews, 1998; Korczynski, 2002; Legge, 2005; Noon and Blyton, 2007). The economic dominance of service industries in developed nations focused attention on the qualities and competitive potential of employees and their behaviour and competencies in customer contact situations.

As with the organisational culture concept, debate over the meaning, rhetoric and reality of the HRM narrative has been energetic in outlining the contradictions and changing perspectives of the theory and the practice (Blyton and Turnbull, 1992; Salaman, 1992; Legge, 1995; Storey, 1995, 2007; Purcell, 1999; Boxall and Purcell, 2003). The literature reviewed here reveals that key areas of concern to both academics and practitioners have been the links between HRM and strategy, between HRM and high performance work systems, between HRM and high commitment employee management, and of the key role of HRM in connection with organisational culture. The development of HRM as a strategic and influential aspect of management praxis derives especially from the conflation of corporate strategy and of organisational culture (notably its 'corporate' culture interpretation), and the goals of high commitment and performance (Kochan and Barocci, 1985; Guest, 1987; Legge, 1989; Purcell, 1992; Schuler, 1992; Storey, 1995; Appelbaum et al, 2000).

It is a central theme of this thesis that a critical factor in the achievement of the HRM goals of high commitment and high performance is a stable workforce. Workforce stability, namely work groups un-fragmented by constantly high labour turnover, provides the conditions for the building of a cohesive culture and for employees to optimise performance levels. The concurrent development of the concept of organisational culture and contemporary models of HRM will now be traced in order to establish the linkages between culture and HRM, and the consequent association with employee commitment and a stable workforce.

3.1.2 Evolution from administration

At the time of the emergence of ‘corporate’ culture as a significant concern of both practitioners and academics, most companies confined the management function of personnel management to an administrative support to line management and employees (Legge, 1978; Schein, 1987; Schuler, 1992). The personnel function was required to offer support and administrative back-up to welfare, recruitment, payroll, disciplinary and grievance procedures, possibly industrial relations negotiation in sectors where trade union membership density was high (Tyson, 1989; Cole, 1997; Price, 2004). However, as outlined by Mahoney and Deckop (1986), a conflation of circumstances in the 1980’s effected a change in this, generating an evolutionary process in people management practices. Mahoney and Deckop (1986) outline these circumstances, citing external environment factors such as economic turbulence, technological change, global competition and a shift in the industrial base from manufacturing to service industries.

A more strategic focus was required from personnel management, directly linked to the commercial success and business objectives of the enterprise (Beer et al, 1984; Lengnick-Hall and Lengnick-Hall, 1988; Storey, 1989) occupying a place in the strategic apex of the organisation because of the importance of employees as a resource, and HRM being integrated into business planning. Mahoney and Deckop (1986) identify this broader remit as possessing characteristics such as a concern with employee involvement, group development and performance, and training and development in the longer term. They also refer to the evolution from a concern by

managers and academics with organisational climate to a preoccupation with organisational culture.

The reasons for these trends are well documented by Guest (1987: 504), and summarised by Beaumont (1992: 22) as a reaction to the increasingly competitive environment in product market conditions which emphasised growth and strategic planning. It was felt that management needed to learn from Japanese organisational and commercial successes (Morgan, 1986: 111). The drive for enterprise and growth led to demands for high performance from organisations and employees. For personnel management specialists it became necessary to demonstrate their contribution to the bottom line. Although personnel management's traditional origins developed in close connection with manufacturing sectors, it was increasingly required to adapt to the burgeoning service sector, itself acutely dependant on the supply and quality of the workforce. Services also presented a different set of workforce characteristics (e.g. low union density) and demands (e.g. service quality direct to consumer), which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

The enterprise agenda forced organisations to seek higher levels of commitment from the workforce, a major emphasis for some US academics of the 80's, such as Walton (1985). He identified the trend away from a traditional control model to a commitment model. The control model was characterised by a bureaucratic administrative structure based on management power, authority and top-down controls. Walton (1985) felt that the commitment model would thrive within a flatter,

less hierarchical organisational structure. There would be a need for a different workplace culture, where management encouraged the sharing of goals and values, and recognised a distinctive mutuality enjoyed by both organisation and employees. HRM was required to find a new and proactive role in such developing organisations. The management of change, incorporating cultural change, frequently fulfilled that requirement, reflecting the influence of the 'excellence' literature of the 1980's. This was particularly evident in major service sector companies (e.g. Prudential, British Airways, Whitbread, Tesco) where strategies of high quality customer service emphasised employee behaviour and commitment in customer care situations, supported by an appropriate culture (Pettigrew and Whipp, 1991; Hopfl et al, 1992; Storey, 1992; Marchington, 1993).

Although there was considerable early writing in the UK, the scholastic and practitioner evolution from personnel administration to a more strategic human resource management became more widely established initially in the United States, Price (2004: 22) noting that the Harvard Business School introduced the subject of HRM into the MBA curriculum as early as 1981. A review of the US experience will now be addressed.

3.1.3 The US influence

An exploration of the origins of models of human resource management and the academic and practitioner development of the HRM chronology necessitates a review of writers and industrialists based in the United States (see Schuler and

Jackson, 2005). Managers and scholars in the US were significantly influenced by the work of leading theorists such as McGregor (1960) and Maslow (1943; 1970). The rapid development of the US economy after the second world war was accompanied by a rapid development in the study of organisations and management with much attention given to organisational behaviour and workforce motivation, summarised and critiqued effectively by Guest (1992) and Beaumont (1992). Legge (2005: 101) concurs that the term HRM, “may be charted first in the writings of US academics and managers.” As an early example of this influence, Sampson (1995) refers to statements by the Chief Executive of the oil company Esso in the 1950’s and 1960’s, who insisted that the organisation made long term staff development plans because the staff were as important a physical asset as the oil reserves drilled from the earth. Sampson (1995: 99) comments that this was “part of the trend towards calling people ‘human resources’.”

McGregor’s seminal publication, “The Human Side of Enterprise” (1960) can be seen to have had a major influence on later approaches to the academic study of HRM as an emerging discipline. The concepts of *Theory X* and *Theory Y* bridged the divide between the concepts of the scientific management and human relations schools. *Theory X*, with its prescription for tightly controlled workers, their effort motivated by extrinsic, monetary rewards pre-empted the so-called ‘hard’ approach of HRM. *Theory Y*, with its emphasis on intrinsic, social motivational aspects such as group work, self-development and fulfillment, provided the foundation for HRM approaches referred to as ‘soft’. Indeed, as HRM became a focus for research and scholarship in US business schools, the ‘hard’, *Theory X*-based approach became

more associated with the University of Michigan (Fombrun, Tichy and Devanna, 1984) whilst the 'soft', *Theory Y*-based model became known also as the Harvard approach (Beer, Spector, Lawrence, Mills and Walton, 1985).

The 'hard' and 'soft' models have several key differences in approach in terms of impact on the development of the concept and ideas of HRM, summarised by Walton (1985) as a shift from control to commitment. The Michigan approach had developed a preoccupation with the strategic focus of HRM, a demand for high performance by a highly controlled human resource bound to the goals of the organisation as it responds to market conditions. The Harvard model emphasises human relations at work, the mutually beneficial integration of organisational and individual commitment and mutual attainment of organisational and individual goals. This 'soft' model of HRM can be seen to have connection with the development of the unitary, corporate culture interpretation and the 'excellence' writers, emphasising such components as commitment, sharing values, achieving mutual goals, and a move towards an integrationist paradigm within organisations. The two approaches are fundamentally different, but are essentially directed towards the same goal, that of high performance and high commitment within the workplace. They might be viewed as merely alternative means of controlling and manipulating the workforce for the benefit of the organisation (Ogbor, 2001).

In a review of US literature in the HRM domain, Beaumont (1992) cites Kochan and Barocci (1985: 95) as concluding that the two leading themes to dominate the US

output have been corporate culture and the alignment of HRM strategy with business strategy. These two themes were particularly central to the writings of various US academics: Ouchi (1981), Deal and Kennedy (1982), Peters and Waterman (1982), Kilmann (1985), Schuler and Jackson (1987) and Schuler (1992). In a commentary from across the Atlantic, Beaumont (1992) considers that the themes of a strategic focus predicated on a strong corporate culture tended to idealism. He expresses methodological doubts and points to the lack of hard empirical evidence to support the claims that HRM linked to business planning and corporate culture initiatives leads to improved company performance. He states that “the academic literature is running well ahead of organisational practice” (Beaumont, 1992: 32). Debates of this nature will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter, as will the response of some US academics in the HRM field who set about providing the incontrovertible evidence of the value of HRM practice (e.g. Huselid, 1995; MacDuffie, 1995; and Pfeffer, 1998).

The literature from US sources has indicated a particular focus on linking culture with HRM and organisational strategy. The next section traces developments in the UK and the reaction of UK writers to the debates frequently initiated in the United States.

3.1.4 The UK experience

In the UK, research into the intertwined concepts of organisational culture and HRM developed in a context frequently characterised by industrial unrest as the traditional

manufacturing and heavy industry sectors fought for survival in a globalised market alongside a national economy more focused on the service sector (Sisson, 1989; Sisson and Storey, 1993). The 1970's in particular experienced turbulent industrial relations against a background of the OPEC oil crisis of 1973, increasing global competition and developing technologies, resulting in successive stand-offs between trade unions and government as well as management and employees (Fox, 1974; Clegg, 1979; Mabey and Salaman, 1995). Those involved with HRM at that time mainly fulfilled 'go-between' roles, mediating, negotiating through collective bargaining procedures, and ensuring organisational compliance with ever-increasing employment and industrial relations legislation (Lucas, 1995). The amount of employment legislation rose sharply following Britain's entry into the European Economic Community in 1972.

The 1980's experienced further industrial unrest but also UK governments committed to deregulation in the labour market and the gradual dismantling of the voluntary collective bargaining processes and institutions (Lucas, 2004). Managers found new strength in the environment of change as information technology-based industries and service firms flourished, employing non-standard employees (Sisson, 1993). These workers were increasingly female, often part-time or on temporary contracts, and without any tradition of trade union membership and activity. Trade union membership fell as the traditional manufacturing and male-dominated industries declined (Beaumont, 1991; Dastmalchian et al, 1991; Starkey and McKinlay, 1993; Millward, 1994; Beardwell and Holden, 1997). Millward (1994) notes the new power and confidence that these events gave back to management, re-

empowered to take decisions on how the firm was to be organised, structured, and how jobs were to be designed for flexibility. The latter factor was also supported by the de-regulation of pay frameworks (such as the Wages Councils), and the casualisation of an increasingly female-dominated, service sector workforce.

The impact of these changes on the development of people management practices within a UK context was significant. Personnel managers, some now re-titled HR Managers, had to re-appraise their role in a new workplace and economy. They had to consider how their activities would integrate and align with corporate strategy and objectives, and with employee relations (rather than industrial relations) in the post-industrialisation era (Beardwell, 1992; Millward, 1994; Storey, 1995; Beardwell, Holden and Claydon, 2004; Lucas, 2004). Guest and Hoque (1994, 1996) have suggested that four different scenarios developed in the 1980's as a result of this new era. In their typology of 'good', 'ugly', 'fad' and 'bad', they describe four types of organisation in the burgeoning non-union economy. The 'good' increasingly adopted enterprising HRM strategies and policies, aimed at 'high-involvement management' and a high commitment workforce. The 'ugly' took full advantage of the lack of employee representation, became 'efficiency-driven', with a ruthless focus on the bottom line, offering minimum pay rates and minimising the effects of costly employment rights. The 'fad' type of business had little coherent strategy but replicated and applied the latest HRM fashion without any real analysis, likely to drop the initiative with the same level of speed and integrity. Finally, the 'bad' face of non-unionism surfaced in a business that failed to adopt any meaningful HRM

strategy, and rejected the positive HRM practices available, managing without concern for HRM.

In response to the themes of US writers and practitioners in terms of an HRM concept focused on strategic alignment and corporate culture, some early UK commentaries (Fowler, 1987; Armstrong, 1987) suggested that there was little more substance than a re-labelling, a superficial re-naming of personnel management to human resources management. This view can be compared with the ‘fad’ type of company described above, and is supported by Guest (1987:506) who notes the number of departments that have been merely re-named as HR departments, even academic text books re-titled without significant change to content.

However, for his part, Guest (1987: 507) proceeds to argue persuasively concerning a set of conceptual differences between traditional personnel management and contemporary HRM. His premise is based on the four key factors of strategic integration, on employee commitment rather than compliance, on flexibility and on quality. In a later summary of his research in the 1990’s, Guest (2001) considers that HRM and its emphasis on commitment had changed the nature of the psychological contract, the often unwritten, implicit set of expectations and obligations between employee and employer (see also Guest et al, 2000; Guest and Conway, 2002). He links the experience of more HRM practices with a more positive psychological contract and an improved level of trust and commitment. A psychological contract based on compliance indicates a cowering workforce, fearing the consequences of

not following management directives due to the coercive power being enforced (see Etzioni, 1980). A psychological contract based on commitment offers employees the hope of a moral involvement and engagement, a committed workforce valuing its role in fulfilling the organisation's purpose, and less likely to leave their employment. As Guest notes:

“Finally, intention to quit is higher among those with a poor psychological contract, who report poor employment relations and who also have a lower level of commitment.” (Guest, 2001: 108)

Other commentators have also defined clear differences and developments in the transition from personnel management to human resource management, claiming that the changing economic and social times were impacting on management ideology and practice in the workplace (Hendry and Pettigrew, 1986; Legge, 1989; Storey, 1992; Sisson and Storey, 2000).

Faced by increasing competition, many organisations placed increasing emphasis on the customers' needs and customer service, noted by Storey and Sisson, (1993: 22-23). Their research revealed that human resource management closely linked to business strategy was still embryonic, “apart from an insistence on customer orientation.” In the increasingly competitive service sector of the late 20th century, the customer assumed a new power, demanding better service quality in a market place of surplus and choice (Gronroos, 1983; Reeves and Bednar, 1994). Managers of service industry firms needed to ensure that their strategic decisions were made with a sharp focus on the customer, as service receiver, and the employee as service provider (Ashness and Lashley, 1995; Redman and Matthews, 1998).

By the year 2003 service industry growth reached the level of 80% of all employment in the UK (Lucas, 2004). Within service firms the aim of increased employee commitment through HRM initiatives was also impacted upon by distinctive features of service work and customer-oriented service encounters. These characteristics, which will be considered in detail in the following chapter, include the challenge of simultaneous production and consumption of the product and service, requiring staff to enact a dual employee commitment to both the organisation and the customer (Jackson and Schuler, 1985; Redman and Mathews, 1998; Korczynski, 2002, 2007). This is particularly so in the element of the service industry within which the field-work for this thesis took place, the hospitality industry, and the next section of this chapter outlines several important aspects of this specific workplace context in terms of its HRM and people management issues.

3.2 HRM and the hospitality industry

The application of the HRM idea within specific service industries is particularly noted by Storey (2001: 3), and he singles out the hospitality industry as an example of just such a development. This section provides a contextual overview of the hospitality industry, followed by analysis of literature that is focused particularly on the employment characteristics of the industry and its workforce. These characteristics have led to a range of perceptions and debates surrounding the hospitality industry that have been considered within mainstream social science research as well as the specific hospitality management research domain. Much of

the literature has questioned the degree to which the industry has actually embraced more contemporary HRM practices.

3.2.1 Scope of the hospitality industry

The hospitality industry is of considerable significance to the UK's service-dominated economy, employing nearly 2 million people (British Hospitality Association, 2006), across a range of market segments including hotels, restaurants, pubs, clubs and contractual food and hospitality services. The sector is characterised also by a range of types of hospitality operator, from global chains and brands to many individually owned and managed properties (Lee-Ross, 1999). In the licensed retail sector for example, nearly 80% of the 58,000 public houses in Britain are run directly by a landlord and family who own or lease the business, yet there are high profile, national chains of vast numbers, one company reported as having control over more than 9,000 outlets (British Hospitality Association, 2006). Such diversity leads to understandable operational variances, including a multiplicity of human resource management approaches.

The diverse workforce across the entire sector also adds to the complexity, typified by a large number of part-time workers (57%), a majority of female workers (62%), and a predominance of younger employees (Hospitality Training Foundation, 2002). A report by the British Hospitality Association, 'Trends and Statistics 2006', reveals that 44% of the total workforce is aged under 30 years, a statistic that rises to 64% in

the pubs, clubs and bars sector. The hospitality workforce is also complex in the wide range of skilled and unskilled occupations. Its traditional labour process model is of a permanent core of full-time, skilled and senior staff, supported by a peripheral and temporary ('casual') workforce called upon to work when its frequently unpredictable business demand levels require additional labour (Wood, 1994; Van Der Wagen, 2003; Lucas, 2004; Nickson, 2007).

3.2.2 Hospitality industry workforce

The demand fluctuations and the non-standard workforce profile led Mars and Mitchell (1977) to assert that there was an 'ad hoc' management style within the industry. This arose from a certain degree of crisis management, as management teams tried to deal with the unpredictable demand, coupled with the high relative cost of labour as a proportion of sales. Flexibility is a key attribute of the business, and managers adapt 'ad hoc' responses to the variable crises and demand levels, that increases the need for flexible staffing arrangements. Such flexibility was dominated by numerical considerations (Purcell and Ahlstrand, 1994) and only later, as related by Kelliher and Riley (2003) was functional flexibility seen as a better solution. Kelliher and Riley (2003) propose that this approach leads to more satisfied, secure and multi-skilled staff, benefitting as much as the employers for whom there appeared to be improved customer service and some evidence of lower labour turnover rates.

The issue of the core and peripheral workers was also raised by Mars and Mitchell (1977), from which the writers deduced a status differential at a number of levels, notably pay rates and the ability to negotiate higher rates for the core workers. This situation would potentially lead to internal difficulties between the permanent and the temporary staff. This fragmented workforce also presents problems to hospitality industry management in terms of maintaining training levels, ensuring consistent standards of service, reputational factors and the cohesion of organisational culture, increasingly sought by contemporary companies (Boella, 1996; Lashley, 1997; Preece, Steven and Steven, 1999). As in the retail sector, female part-time workers also provide a large proportion of the peripheral workforce and their motivation and commitment to the organisation is frequently less than their commitment to the additional money for their family budget (Ogbonna, 1992; Hakim, 1995; Pratten, 2003).

The demographics of the diverse and non-standard hospitality workforce are sufficiently different to warrant for a more in-depth understanding of the sector and its HRM characteristics such as occupational skill shortages and volatile labour turnover patterns (Kelliher and Johnson, 1987; Price, 1994; McGunnigle and Jameson, 2000; Hoque, 2000). As an example, the food service employee profile may consist of full-time, skilled professionals; unskilled part-time and temporary staff; transient 'tourist workers' and university students; and housewives supplementing the family income (Pratten, 2003: 829). The importance of recognising the different demographic features of the hospitality workforce was also a conclusion of a study of hotel employees (Lam, Zhang and Baum, 2001),

particularly when linked to an individual's need for job satisfaction, or the extent of their motivation and commitment and their degree of loyalty to the organisation.

There are also implications for such a diverse and non-standard workforce in terms of the industry's need for effective work teams, often organised and rostered to work together on regular shifts. The resulting impact of group dynamics and social interaction (as in the differentiated sub-cultures within the social anthropology literature) become a potential factor in efficiency and effectiveness in customer service. In this context, French and Bell (1990: 31) refer to "team culture", a crucial factor according to Preece, Steven and Steven (1999) within the licensed retailing sector of the hospitality industry. They found that the team or work group in pubs is critical in accepting and in socialising a new team member and in conditioning that new colleague into the group's way of behaving and interacting with each other, and with the customer. Employee induction programmes become critical as new staff will be greatly influenced by the prevailing attitudes within existing teams and supervisors (Lashley, 1997; Lashley and Rowson, 2000; Tyson and York, 2000; Seymour and Sandiford, 2005; Yang, 2008).

Employee induction is also a regular and significant activity in the hospitality industry, in part because of the high turnover rates associated with a plentiful numerical supply of labour, such as students and seekers of part-time and temporary work. Sonnenfield et al (1992) conclude that the hotels and retail sectors are high on external supply of labour but often suffer from an under-developed internal labour

market and a lack of training and development planning. Sonnenfield et al (1992) also point to these sectors emphasising group or work team contribution sometimes at the expense of individual development and job security. The inference is a workforce that is easily replaceable and easily trained due to the low skill levels. These factors affect the managerial approach and attitudinal acceptance of labour turnover. In a study of multi-divisional companies, Purcell and Ahlstrand (1994: 194) refer to a “traditional style” of management in sectors like the hotel and catering industry. Their study of multi-unit firms is of significance to the hospitality industry as so many large chains, national and international, typify the branded and high profile sections of the business. Yet they still found “traditional styles” at work in hotels, restaurants and fast food outlets, where labour was perceived as a cost alone, and all efforts made to minimise that cost, resulting in a command-and-control managerial style, a ‘hard’ HRM approach. In their words:

“Firms with a traditional style are most often found in labour-intensive, low technology industries where the level of skill required is so low that labour can easily be replaced without much training...typically the case in hotel and catering firms.” Purcell and Ahlstrand (1994: 194).

The underlying factors and characteristics discussed above have had significant impact on the perception of the hospitality industry as an employer that has consistently failed to tackle effectively its human resource management challenges.

3.2.3 HRM issues in the hospitality industry

Analysis of recent literature concerned with managing the hospitality workforce reveals a preoccupation with a set of perceptions about working in the industry that

warrants some consideration in laying the foundation of this thesis. These perceptions consist of elements such as low pay, long and unsocial hours, poor employment terms and conditions, an autocratic management style unrestrained by trade union activity, high labour turnover, a lack of training, and little emphasis on contemporary human resource management practices (Wood, 1992, 1994; Deery and Iverson, 1996; Boella, 1996; Hoque, 2000; Kelliher and Perrett, 2001; Lucas, 2004; Baum, 2002, 2006; Nickson, 2007).

Recently, there has been a lively debate as to whether or not the dominant perception of the industry is in fact a true reflection of reality. Research in the 1980's and early 1990's tended to paint a rather depressing picture of the extent of the development of HRM policies and practices, Lucas (1995: 14) describing an industry, "characterised by ad hoc management, a lack of trade unions, and high, possibly unavoidable labour turnover." Lucas also comments that there has been a lack of empirical research into the HRM practices within the industry. She later concludes that the hospitality industry workforce is 'vulnerable' and that as a result, gaining employee commitment is elusive:

"The labour force is highly mobile, often with a short-term orientation to the (industry), generating high labour turnover and leaver rates. Recruitment and retention is particularly problematic, particularly for managers where a lack of professionalism may impede business success." (Lucas, 2004: 225).

The under-developed application of HRM within the hospitality industry, in terms of high commitment and high performance objectives, has also been confirmed in studies by Kelliher and Johnson (1987), Cronley (1988), Wood (1992), Price (1994)

and McGunnigle and Jameson (2000). The industry's continuing challenges of skill shortages, high labour turnover and recruitment and retention issues are also highlighted in an "Employers Skill Survey" (Department for Education and Employment, 2000). McGunnigle and Jameson (2000) considered that there was certainly an awareness that hospitality management should seek to gain more commitment from its workforce, but "little evidence is found of contemporary recruitment and selection methods commensurate with this aim" (2000: 1). However, this study found some examples of HRM innovation, particularly training schemes, though such examples were sporadic and placed somewhat awkwardly alongside very traditional 'personnel management'.

McGunnigle and Jameson (2000) also found in their research, undertaken within the hotel sector of the industry, that there was a consuming effort regarding recruitment and selection, especially in terms of the mechanics of personnel administration. Managers were preoccupied with tasks such as the updating of job descriptions and health and safety records, suggesting 'a clerk of works' approach to HRM (Tyson and Fell, 1986) rather than a move towards more strategic HRM. Kelliher and Johnson's follow-up study in 1997, a decade after their first inquiry, revealed only minor developments, and concluded significantly that, "because of the high levels of labour turnover experienced by the hotel industry, recruitment was found to be the dominant activity (1997: 321)." In a later study of the alignment of business strategy and HRM in the restaurant sector, Kelliher and Perrett (2001) again found some evidence of HRM practices being developed, but that there was a lack of a strategic linkage between business and HRM activities, the lack of a consistent approach. The

major emphasis was once again on recruitment and retention, though there were examples of more sophisticated approaches to selection and to training programmes. Citing the work of Redman and Matthews (1998), Kelliher and Perrett conclude that the 'strategic fit' of business and HRM is clearly a difficult goal to achieve within the service sector.

The scholastic debate concerning the hospitality industry and its stage of HRM development was particularly enlivened by the publications of Hoque (1999, 2000), following an in-depth study of HRM practices in the UK hotel sector. Hoque's conclusions appeared in contrast to much of the previous research output in that it painted a substantially brighter picture of a sector embracing the policies and practices of contemporary HRM, declaring that such approaches were developing rapidly in the sector due to the competitive environment and to the service culture and service quality demands. Hoque's assertions inspired critical responses from some hospitality management academics, notably Nickson and Wood (2000: 88-90). They criticised aspects of Hoque's methodology, the generalisability of a study confined to large hotels, and to Hoque's apparent disregard for 'the dominant critical tradition' of the previous studies referred to above. These comments were particularly aimed at the 1999 article, and in his later book publication in 2000, Hoque does point to the fact that many studies have revealed little interest in HRM (p.25), but also seeks out some of the more positive aspects of studies regarding HRM and the hospitality industry. He points to HRM and service quality initiatives, to a more consultative management style, and to empowerment and career planning

through more focus on the internal labour market within the multi-unit chains (Hoque, 2000: 49).

It is argued in this thesis that much of the critique of the industry can be understood by reference to the simultaneous developments of the organisational culture and HRM concepts. In particular, it is relevant to draw comparison with the ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ models, discussed earlier in this chapter, that differentiated the Michigan and Harvard schools of thought, and the perceived trajectory (as with Walton, 1985) towards more concern with integrative, ‘soft’ approaches stressing commitment, as opposed to the ‘hard’ approaches stressing control and compliance. For customer-service oriented activities such as the highly competitive hospitality industry, workplace tension is a constant possibility as management seek to create a ‘service culture’ in which staff are required to be committed to both customer service and organisational efficiency. Lashley’s research within one national pub/restaurant chain in the late 1990’s uncovered practices and approaches that concurrently displayed ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ approaches. Lashley exemplifies it as follows: “a preparedness to apply the hard perspective in controlling the labour cost, and exercise care in the management of the human resource” (Lashley, 1997: 171).

This comment echoes with other realities where the twin rhetorics of ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ management of people find themselves conjoined within the same organisation. Legge (2005: 126) refers to this application of ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ approaches in parallel in connection with the employment model of core and

peripheral workers. The hospitality industry' staffing strategy has long been predicated on a group of key or core workers, supplemented as required by a group of peripheral or 'casual', temporary workers. Legge proposes the situation where the 'soft' version of HRM might well be applied to the core workers, the permanent resource that needs to be committed, loyal, developed, and valued in a mutually beneficial relationship with the employer. However, the 'hard' version might well be applied to the temporary, peripheral worker whose labour is required only when necessary and is therefore seen much more as a cost to be controlled.

There are connections in this scenario to the study by Ogbonna (1992) within the retail sector, when he considered the contradiction between the need for close supervision and surveillance of staff behaviour towards customers, and the need for highly committed, motivated employees who are trained extensively in customer care and company culture. Ogbonna considers that this is challenging enough without the incidence of high labour turnover. The corporate aim to develop a strong and unified organisational culture, undifferentiated and unfragmented, appears highly unlikely to be fulfilled in such service work. The simultaneous application of commitment and compliance techniques may be an unavoidable characteristic of hospitality work and hospitality organisational cultures, and the analysis is certainly helpful in understanding the challenge. There remains the task of unlocking potential solutions, a task identified by the work of Korczynski (2002). He proposes that the HRM role is, "Important as engendering dual-focused, efficient and customer-oriented worker behaviour, and as seeking to cope with ensuing tensions", while management attempts to manage a "fragile social order", one which is, in many

service businesses, consistently fragmented by high labour turnover (Korczynski, 2002: 65).

3.2.4 Research developments in hospitality and HRM

In terms of HRM academic literature within the specific domain of hospitality management, earlier works tended to a normative approach, reacting to the problems of the sector by proposing prescriptions for improvement. The philosophy behind these normative, 'best practice' approaches was to help management and potential managers to consider alternative policies and processes in order to improve effectiveness and efficiency and to specifically resolve the human resource problems of high labour turnover, skill shortages, training and career development (Jones, 1989; Riley, 1991; Mullins, 1992; Boella, 1996). The studies referred to earlier by such as Wood (1992, 1994), Price (1994), and Lucas (1995), reported limited utilisation of more advanced HRM practices. One area significantly neglected in the output of the hospitality and HRM research domain has been that connected with organisational culture and the relationships with contemporary high commitment and high performance HR practices. This lacuna in the literature and research base is noted in an article by Guerrier and Deery (1998). They note (p.146) that there has been relatively sparse output in terms of organisational culture within the hospitality journals, a point also made later by Ogbonna and Harris (2002: 37).

Guerrier and Deery (1998) review a large tranche of research output within the HRM and hospitality domain up to the late 1990's and note three major themes which have preoccupied researchers, giving us some indication of the development of hospitality and HRM. Firstly, their review highlights considerable research output of the sector's labour markets as a notable emphasis, including that of labour turnover, though with most research being connected with, "the understanding of turnover intentions and behaviour, little attention having been given to developing new models or theories" (1998: 147). A second main theme of their review is that of employee attitudes, and the important interaction between employees and customers, noting that the work of Hochschild (1983), and the concept of emotional labour has attracted increased attention in the hospitality research output of the late 1990's.

The third theme, that of organisation structure and culture, generates the comment from the writers that there "has been relatively little recent work which looks at hospitality organisations as organisations, focusing on structures and cultures" (Guerrier and Deery, 1998: p.149). There is also the comment that it is timely to consider particular issues regarding organisational culture in the hospitality arena, "for example how culture may be related to (labour) turnover" (p.150). In this way, Guerrier and Deery conclude that there is a gap in the hospitality-oriented literature concerning linkages between HRM, culture and labour turnover.

Given this overview of the evolution and development of HRM within the generic contexts of the US and the UK, and the specific context of the hospitality industry, it

is now timely to move on to the central theme and debates surrounding the interrelationship between culture and HRM.

3.3 Culture and HRM

The intertwined conceptual developments of HRM and organisational culture have been considered in a range of literatures from the early 1980's. As noted in Chapter 2, a high profile influence was the work of Peters and Waterman (1982) and their major role in the initiation of the 'excellence literature', spawning a best-selling business shelf book and business video at the time. In particular, Peters and Waterman asserted that a strong corporate culture will lead to a strong commercial performance, linked to the other goals of mutual benefit between individual and organisation, as in customer service, quality and productivity. It is noteworthy that many of the 'excellence' companies researched were contemporary service sector businesses. Peters and Waterman saw corporate culture as the integrative paradigm, managing the ambiguity: "culture and shared values are important in unifying the social dimension of an organization" (1982: 106). Their pronouncements on strong cultures in organisations were complemented and developed by such as Ouchi (1981), Deal and Kennedy (1982), Kilmann (1982), Kanter (1984), and Schein (1985). Their narrative further strengthened and supported the evolution of HRM from an administrative function to an agent for cultural change that can ensure exceptional customer service.

Mabey and Salaman (1995:477) argue that this body of literature, though not without its critics over methodology and its interpretation of cultural theory, was influential in encouraging the debate about the meaning of human resource management and the connections with the management of organisational culture. As culture is in part connected to the behaviour, values and attitudes of the employees in an organisation, the boost to the importance of HRM was substantial. The importance of the linkages between managing culture in the 'corporate culture' sense, and HRM developments was further confirmed by Storey (1995:8; 2007: 11), when suggesting that for many senior managers they have "become one and the same project."

3.3.1 Debates and developments

The developments in the concept and practice of HRM alongside the emphasis upon organisational culture have also been associated with a concern and scepticism over the rigour and robustness of the HRM idea. In particular, debates have continued over the meaning of HRM, whether it is genuinely an approach of mutual benefit to organisation and employee, or a mere fad and managerial ploy to invoke a new style of workforce manipulation through cultural means (Keenoy and Anthony, 1992). Poole and Mansfield (1992) concluded that managers' attitudes were in the main positive and consistent with the precepts of HRM, but with the caveat that circumstances of the 1980's and 1990's (free market policies and reduced state intervention) favoured such approaches. The possibility of HRM being more of a cultural workplace symbol and discourse rather than a substantive managerial praxis was raised by Storey and Sisson (1993). They concluded somewhat pessimistically

that the lack of coherence in HRM practices reviewed in their research, “might indicate the true nature of the HRM phenomenon, i.e. that it is in reality a symbolic label behind which lurk multifarious practices” (Storey and Sisson, 1993: 22-23). In her seminal text, “Human Resource Management: Rhetorics and Realities” (1995, 2005), Karen Legge argues that the distinctiveness of contemporary HRM meaning lies in its rhetoric as much as the reality of its implementation. It is a significant discourse and set of ideas in how to manage workers in a competitive world:

“the importance of HRM...lies just as much and (possibly more so) in its function as a rhetoric about how employees should be managed to achieve competitive advantage than as a coherent practice.” Legge (1995: xv).

The contradictions and contentions within the HRM domain mirror the equivalent challenges with the debates over the meaning of organisational culture rehearsed in the previous chapter. Whilst there is strong evidence of enthusiasm and support from both scholars and managers, there is also doubt and uncertainty as to the tangible results and outputs. This uncertainty over the reality needs continual exploration and analysis by empirical means, yet the rhetoric and narrative of strong cultures is also powerful and influential as it is ‘authored’ and communicated (see Holman and Thorpe, 2003). Managers are certainly enthusiastic at composing culture-driven messages and company mottoes (Morgan, 1986: 121). These messages or ‘linguistic turns’ as developed by Holman and Thorpe (2003: 2) are regularly repeated and replicated by senior management through the medium of language and organisational documentation (Legge, 2005: 127).

Legge refers to phrases such as 'putting people first', 'putting the needs of the business first' and 'tough love' as language and messages used by executives of the late 1980's in their attempts to communicate the meaning of HRM ideas. The extent to which the employees listen, and more importantly believe, is the critical issue. Korczynski (2002: 67) refers to this rhetorical and symbolic role of HRM, "the power of HRM lies not so much in its substantive content...but rather in the language and symbols it uses and the effect these have on the workforce." The implication is that HRM is critical to the development of a workplace culture and discourse from a semiotic perspective, a symbol or sign of the culture and of how employees are expected to behave.

Culture and employee behaviour were elements at the heart of the work of Peters and Waterman (1982) and Deal and Kennedy (1982). Whilst undoubtedly bringing the culture and HRM debate to the fore, their research and output has been particularly singled out for being methodologically flawed and one-dimensional. The charge is that the work is excessively qualitative, merely normative and prescriptive consultancy material (again more rhetoric than reality), and somewhat impoverished in the depth of their understanding of culture and cultural theory (Meek, 1988; Willmott, 1993; Anthony, 1994; Mabey and Salaman, 1995). However, their integrative, 'strong' corporate culture interpretation also raised the profile of the service companies, with an obsessive concern for customer service as the competitive edge, provided by highly committed service personnel. As such, this literature made a contribution to the debate concerning the proposition that contemporary management practices should move away from employee control and

compliance toward employee commitment within a supportive culture. This proposition exerted influence on the later research and commentaries, even if only as a starting point and easy target for critique and argumentation (see Beer et al, 1985; Armstrong, 1987; Guest, 1987; Ogbonna and Wilkinson, 1988; Ogbonna, 1992; Keenoy and Anthony, 1992).

The criticism of the research underpinning this ‘excellence’ period is partly methodological, but also that it over-simplified the culture concept by mainly highlighting the outward manifestations of culture. Such manifestations were seen as inspired, controlled and manipulated by management and failed to root those outward signs in more critical cultural theory (Meek, 1992; Martin, 1992; Keenoy and Anthony, 1992; Trice and Beyer, 1993; Ogbor, 2001). In this way, the ‘excellence’ literature also energised the debate summarised in the previous chapter concerning whether organisational culture is a variable to be influenced and imposed by management or a result of the social interaction of employees in work groups and sub-cultures.

Ogbor (2001) points to the hegemony of corporate culture in his application of critical theory, seeing culture as a managerial tool for controlling, repressing the employees, and contends that it makes no difference whether *Theory X* or *Theory Y* management approaches are adopted. In Ogbor’s analysis, *Theory X* and ‘hard’ HRM impose cultural controls upon employees through disempowerment, constraint and command, through instilling a fear that non-compliance will lead to exclusion.

Theory Y and ‘soft’ HRM also controls employees, but by indoctrination and emotional control, by HRM practices such as corporate induction and training. However, these approaches also disempower the workforce because employees are conditioned to behave in line with the espoused culture: “Disempowerment is achieved through a kind of control that is directed at people’s minds, such as values, ethical beliefs, emotions, aesthetics, ideologies, pride etc.” Ogbor (2001: 597).

The strong critique regarding the manipulative nature and consequences of the harnessing of culture and HRM was also discussed by Keenoy and Anthony (1992: 235), suggesting provocatively that HRM practices could be interpreted as “cultural constructions fabricated through Government policy and corporate administrative fiat.” Their critique echoes the Marxist perspectives of Hyman (1975), when they consider the possibility that HRM interventions (though outwardly pluralist in message) were merely cloaked managerialist attempts to affect social interaction and behaviour at work following the industrial strife of the 1980’s. HRM is described as “a self-seeking cultural product,” (Keenoy and Anthony, 1992: 236), with the covert reality of managers wishing to manipulate the behaviour of its employees, cynically gaining their tacit commitment in an economy still reeling from economic crisis. HRM has certainly become an agent for the implementation of managerially-desired cultural change within many contemporary organisations, exemplified by extensive training and development programmes designed to affect employee behaviour, values and attitudes.

The developing proposition that an alliance between corporate culture and HRM was the recipe for success in the new era of global competition, technological change and customer service preoccupation, has been seen to have contributed to a serious and far-reaching debate. The rhetoric of corporate culture was being interpreted as part of a new rhetoric for HRM, giving managers a powerful language and narrative of influence towards employees and also customers:

“senior managers responsible in some way for making decisions affecting employment are expected to be able to articulate some coherent rationale for their stream of decisions” (Storey, 2007: 12).

However, the reality of actual outputs and results was difficult to quantify and validate. Understandably, some researchers set out to tackle the uncertainty over the reality of the contemporary interpretations of HRM and its relationship with strategy, culture, commitment and performance.

3.3.2 Empirical evidence

Criticisms regarding the lack of hard evidence concerning the reality of the HRM idea and the value of its connection with the organisational culture concept stemmed in part from concern with overly qualitative, normative and prescriptive methodologies. In response, the mid-1990's saw a number of researchers moving towards more quantitative methods, aiming to assess and measure the value of HRM practices through empirical evidence. The value element arose from the view that the human resource creates value through its skills and competencies, also referred to as a resource-based value (RBV) approach (Barney, 1991; Beer, 1997). Research output

and influential articles from Prahalad and Hamel (1990) concluded that organisations needed to develop a coherent and unique set of competencies that assured strategic fulfilment and competitive advantage.

In valuing the contribution of HRM practices, research attempted to demonstrate in measurable terms how HRM could lead to actual performance improvement. In the forefront of this trend towards quantification were US writers such as Huselid (1995), MacDuffie (1995) and Pfeffer (1994, 1998). In effect, the goal became to give statistical values to the contribution made by HR practices to organisational performance. Huselid (1995) applied a range of variables of business performance to evaluate the HR contribution, selecting labour turnover and retention as a key indicator of organisational and HRM effectiveness. In the case of turnover, he aimed to demonstrate that by adopting a range of HRM practices and procedures (known as ‘bundles’ after MacDuffie) a statistically significant and actual decrease in labour turnover rates would result. In a quantitative study of nearly 1000 US firms, Huselid claimed substantial returns for the investment by firms in high performance work systems, including the example of, “A one standard deviation increase in such practices is associated with a relative 7.05% decrease in (labour) turnover, and on a per employee basis, \$27,044 more in sales and \$18,641 and \$3,814 more in market value and profits, respectively” (Huselid, 1995: 667). Appelbaum et al (2000: 201) conclude that high performance work systems possess characteristics which generally enhance workers’ levels of job satisfaction and organisational commitment, citing a ‘bundle’ of practices including: participation and involvement in decision-making; incentives and intrinsic rewards; and skills development. Their research

found that staff in such organisations are, “more willing to work hard on its behalf and more apt to want to continue their attachment to it.”

The concept of ‘bundles’ of HRM practices leading to a measurable improvement in business performance was taken up by Pfeffer (1998) in developing his seven best practices: employment security, selective recruitment, self-managing work teams, reward systems based on organisational performance, high levels of training, reducing status hierarchies and the sharing of information and best practice. However, the more positivist stance of these researchers has also led to debate about their perhaps over-zealous desire for statistical proof of the HRM value, and whether or not there is a need to tie it down to a set of ‘bundles’. Methodological concerns emerged as to how the ‘bundles’ of best practices could be measured accurately in different types of organisations in different conditions, and how should the data be collected, and how reliable and generalisable can it truly be? (see Guest, 1997; Purcell, 1999; Marchington and Grugulis, 2000; Boxall and Purcell, 2003; Marchington and Cox, 2007).

There are several difficulties in the causal connections assumed and measured by each researcher. For example, it can be argued that labour turnover is affected by many external variables which presents problems in attempting to isolate and measure the impact of HRM interventions, such as cultural change management as a variable, on labour turnover patterns and rates. Even defining labour turnover (e.g. voluntary or involuntary) and achieving agreement on means of measuring turnover

has presented a range of alternatives and possibilities which cast doubt on the suitability and reliability of quantitative research outcomes (Price, 1977; Mobley, 1982; Lee and Mitchell, 1994). Legge observes wryly that, “In part under the influence of US academic imperialism, modernist, positivistic perspectives are now dominant” (1995: 3). Research critiques and analyses lead to further argument and research. Discussions of the link between HRM and business performance remain at the forefront (see Boxall, 1996; Boxall and Purcell, 2003; Purcell et al, 2003; Purcell, 2004), with much attention given to the detail of those linkages, unpicking the causal relationships between HRM inputs and outputs, including the impact of organisational culture on employee commitment and labour turnover. The drive by some to quantify the benefits, the reality, of contemporary HRM practices has also tended to overshadow the very influential importance of the rhetoric itself.

3.3.3 Culture as lever to HRM

The relationship between organisational culture and HRM is embraced within the model developed by Storey (2001, 2007), who also refers to the contradictions and ambiguities surrounding the meaning and nature of HRM, noting that few precise definitions are offered, but offering his own definition of a coherent HRM approach from an earlier work (1995:5):

“Human resource management is a distinctive approach to employment management which seeks to achieve competitive advantage through the strategic deployment of a highly committed and capable workforce using an array of cultural, structural and personnel techniques.”

Storey offers his HRM Model (2001: 7), reproduced as Figure No. 6 below, as a summary of the strands of more contemporary thinking regarding the meaning of HRM.

Figure No. 6: Storey's HRM Model

1 *Beliefs and assumptions*

- That it is the human resource that gives competitive edge.
- That the aim should be not mere compliance with rules, but employee commitment.
- That therefore employees should, for example, be very carefully selected and developed.

2 *Strategic qualities*

- Because of the above factors, HR decisions are of strategic importance.
- Top management involvement is necessary.
- HR policies should be integrated into the business strategy - stemming from it and even contributing to it.

3 *Critical role of managers*

- Because HR practice is critical to the core activities of the business, it is too important to be left to personnel specialists alone.
- Line managers are (or need to be) closely involved both as deliverers and drivers of the HR policies.
- Much greater attention is paid to the management of managers themselves.

4 *Key levers*

- Managing culture is more important than managing procedures and systems.
 - Integrated action on selection, communication, training, reward and development.
 - Restructuring and job redesign to allow devolved responsibility and empowerment.
-

Source: Storey (2007) p. 9

The first element of the model acknowledges the core beliefs and assumptions within a framework that the success of organisations in a competitive environment is dependant on the quality of its human resource, the commitment (rather than compliance) of that resource and therefore its need to be selected and trained in the most professional manner. The second element concerns the links between HRM and strategy, such a strong argument within the literature since the 1980's. Storey deals with this aspect by outlining the strategic qualities required, such as strategic HR decisions, involving and with the full endorsement of senior management, the resulting policies integrated with the corporate strategy. The third element tackles the question of the role of managers, including line managers, because if it is agreed that HR policy and practice is strategically critical to the future of the organisation, then all managers must be involved and capable in the implementation of such policies. Finally, the fourth element refers to certain 'key levers', which crucially leads us to the statement in the model that, "Managing culture is more important than managing procedures and systems," (Storey, 2001: 7), plus the leverage offered by integrated action on personnel policies and the need to review job design to encourage empowerment, flexibility and devolved responsibility.

Storey suggests that managers see corporate culture management as important because of its potential, "to offer a key to the unlocking of consensus, flexibility and commitment" (2007: 11). Consensus is seen in terms of the sharing of a common set of values and beliefs, flexibility in terms of job design and increased productivity. Commitment is seen in terms of employees maximising their effort for the organisation through outstanding performance. No longer are HR managers typified

as “clerk of works” as in the typology of Tyson and Fell (1986), but are closer to the “architect”, alongside operational line management in providing a blueprint for HRM’s role in facilitating strategic success, enabled by a supportive organisational culture. In this way, the culture facilitates and guides the work of HR management in its policies and practices, which need to enable performance through engendering consensus of values and employee commitment.

Other commentators develop further the theme of HRM practices being capable of influencing the cohesion and reproduction of the organisational culture, and the collective effort and commitment to achieve strategic goals. A frequent example is that of effective recruitment and selection methods followed by socialisation (initiation in cultural theory terms) of the new employee via culturally constructed induction and performance-enhancing training (Harrison, 1972, 2000; Redman and Wilkinson, 2001; Holbeche, 2001; Cheyne and Loan-Clarke, 2006). Holbeche (2001: 359) considers a key HR objective to be the creation of a workplace, “where work practices are adaptable to changing needs and where people are flexible, skilled and committed.” She stresses the need for continuity, exemplified by low employee turnover, a necessary condition for the attainment of Storey’s culture-levered HRM aims of consensus, flexibility and commitment.

3.4 Culture, HRM and commitment

The charge by Keenoy and Anthony (1992) against HRM as the purveyor of cynical ‘cultural constructions’ may touch a nerve of the interrelationship between

organisational culture and HRM. As in the predominantly corporate and integration interpretation of culture as a variable to be shaped by management's espoused values and language, HRM is seen as the intermediary in devising policies and procedures which seek to manipulate culture and affect employee behaviour and attitudes in order to gain commitment. Such a commitment could be seen as being based on 'calculative' behaviour and attitudes, which complies with the desired 'official' culture as created by management, but is a brittle, perhaps tacit commitment. It is not a deep-seated, psychological commitment to the organisation and its cultural values. It is unlikely to encourage determined and continued membership of the organisation and is unlikely to have a positive effect on labour turnover intentions.

Whilst acknowledging that there is a broad and substantive literature devoted to the topic of employee and organisational commitment in itself, the boundaries of this thesis determine that commitment will be considered within the context of it being a crucial element and aim of organisational culture and HRM initiatives, as in high performance and high commitment approaches (Wood and Menezes, 1998; Wood, 1999; Appelbaum et al, 2000; Delbridge and Whitfield, 2001; Redman and Snape, 2005; Marchington and Cox, 2007; Paauwe, 2004, 2008). In particular, and in line with the literature of labour turnover theory that will be reviewed in the next Chapter, this study will explore the relationship between the nature and strength of the commitment and its influence on the propensity of employees to stay or leave employment.

In line with the work of Allen and Meyer (1990) and later of Meyer and Allen (1991), regarding commitment and turnover, it is clear that employees may experience different forms of commitment dependant on the environment in which they work. Most positively, affective commitment can be engendered by experiencing such satisfying and positive experiences that the employee wishes to stay in the employment (Meyer et al. 2002; Shore et al, 2006; Kuvaas, 2007; Yang, 2008). More practically and instrumentally, the employee may need to stay committed because of a lack of alternative jobs, because of the pay and benefits already acquired, a continuance commitment. Thirdly, a normative commitment may result from an employee feeling that they ought to stay in a particular job because of a moral commitment connected with personal values. Redman and Snape (2005) add that their research found that employees may have multiple foci of commitment, as in the immediate line manager, the work group, the organisation and the customer.

In an exploration of the links between organisational culture and labour turnover, the literature within the HRM domain concerning commitment and performance emerges as significant as part of a multi-faceted interrelationship, labour turnover through low commitment leading to reduced performance. In his article, “Human resource management and industrial relations”, David Guest succinctly posits the central ‘equation’, that strong HRM practices lead to employee commitment, which in turn leads to improved organisational performance:

“The rationale behind this can be found in the assumption that committed employees will be more satisfied, more productive and more adaptable” (Guest, 1987: 513).

The assumption within this quotation has clear implications for workforce stability, staff retention and labour turnover, in that a lack of individual commitment will lead to dissatisfaction which is likely to lead to turnover, and will lead to reduced organisational performance due to dissatisfied, unproductive and inflexible employees (later endorsed by Shore et al, 2006; Paauwe, 2008). Guest's approach is linear and logical in its concept, based on the assumption that the HRM practices are an independent variable in the formula, requiring a positivistic methodology to be applied, "establishing a causal relationship between HRM and performance" (Legge, 2001: 23). Guest (1997) also echoes the work of US writers Huselid (1995), Pfeffer (1994; 1998) Delery (1998) and MacDuffie (1995) in proposing a universalist thesis claiming that by combining a certain number of HRM best practice initiatives, employee commitment and thus organisational performance will improve. Purcell (1999; 2004) has criticised the methodology because different groups of researchers have applied different lists of best practice. Purcell's critique, supported by Marchington and Zagelmeyer (2005) asserts that so many HR researchers have sought the 'holy grail' of proving the links between HRM best practice and commitment and performance, but they have all too often taken different journeys and visited different locations en route, ending up in a 'cul de sac' (Purcell, 1999).

Legge (2001) contrasts the position taken by Guest with one which sees HRM as a dependent variable, influenced by external factors such as the economy, the health of the product market in which the organisation operates, the organisation's resultant strategy, and the wide variety of HRM policies and practices which might be adopted in different times and different sectors. In other words, there is considerable doubt

over the nature and direction of the causal relationship; is it the case that combining a set of high commitment HRM practices, or ‘bundles’ will lead to high organisational performance, or is it rather that an organisation with a successful strategy in a buoyant product or service market is most likely to introduce enlightened HRM policies and procedures which enable high employee commitment?

This latter question highlights the level of uncertainty surrounding the direct relationships between HRM, culture, commitment and performance. Whilst the question poses the two most opposing ends of the debate, there are many intermediary interpretations, including that of Purcell (2004: 13), commenting in conclusion to a major study for the CIPD that, “there is no one type of HRM which suits every organization—the key is to find what is most appropriate in context, and to know what is the purpose of HRM.” This contingent, ‘best fit’ approach is supported by Delery and Doti (1996). Purcell draws on the work of Boxall (1996), who emphasised less the measurable, quantitative links between practices, commitment and performance, but more on the systems, processes and mechanisms that link them. Boxall (1996) and later Boxall and Purcell (2003) stress that not only do successful companies recruit, select, train and develop their employees effectively, but that they also have HRM-led processes which facilitate the effective workforce, which assist the commitment and performance through aspects such as cross-functional teamwork, team development, leadership example and a supportive and appropriate organisational culture.

Other studies have also featured prominently the importance of organisational culture in the relationship between HRM, commitment and performance. Patterson et al (1997) concluded that the most important factor that determined employee performance through increased commitment was the organisation's culture and the welfare services of the HR departments. Hall (2004:10) comments on this finding by suggesting a methodological flaw in quantitative research to prove the value of the HRM 'bundles'. She proposes that such research is misplaced (much in the manner of Legge above), literally, and that the research should actually begin with the performance levels and work back:

“It may well be that the nature of organisational culture and the extent to which employees feel valued by the organisation and their immediate manager have a much greater influence on employee performance than ‘innovative’ HR practices, and yet this potential relationship has rarely been explored.” Hall (2004:10).

Hall's insightful comment is apposite to the current study within the licensed retail sector, a sector where the labour process is dominated by small work teams working alongside their immediate manager or supervisor. It is also considered that the 'best fit' approach, contingent on the organisation and its particular environment is appropriate for hospitality enterprises that vary so much in their size, type, location and workforce profiles. Purcell's concerns over methodology of earnest positivistic approaches toward verifying the links between culture, HR practices, commitment and performance seem to connect with the already ambiguous nature of the definitions and interpretations of the organisational culture and HRM relationship and the various forms which employee commitment might take within a single organisation.

The contingent, 'best fit' approach also emerges as another step in the conceptual development of HRM. In tracing this development, it has been established that from a personnel welfare and administration origin, personnel management found a new role in providing a linkage between employer and employee as in industrial relations negotiations. The HRM idea, linking more closely to strategy, performance and culture, developed as a more homogenising, integrating force, seeking to provide normative solutions to employment and enterprise challenges. The 'best fit' view appears to take a more heterogeneous stance, accepting the diversity of organisations and their circumstances. The specific purpose of HRM needs to be assessed and determined by each particular organisation in the light of those circumstances, and the processes and systems devised which will facilitate a high performance and committed workforce.

3.4.1 Culture, commitment and employee retention

The connection between employee commitment and cultural change is central to the 'soft' HRM models, where employees are trusted, are developed as individuals and as work teams, and where the individual and the organisation seek to achieve mutually beneficial goals. Legge (1995: 209) writes that, "commitment is self-evidently intertwined with organisational culture from the moment we ask the question 'commitment to what?'" She develops the point by stating that it can only be commitment to the organisation, its purpose, shared values, and policies, which "may be seen as expressive of organisational culture." The mutuality of goals predicated a situation where organisation and employee stay together, where

employee retention is important. Porter (1985), defined commitment as the strength of an individual's involvement and participation within a specific organisation, an affective and attitudinal commitment based on a strong desire to stay in employment within that organisation, a sharing of its purpose and values, and a willingness to work hard for that organisation.

The importance of employee retention and workforce stability lies in its acting as a measure of HRM success and sustained organisational competitive advantage, particularly when linked to highly developed recruitment and selection methods (Marchington and Wilkinson, 2005: 75). Labour turnover, a phenomenon which will be considered in more detail in Chapter 4, is frequently a measure utilised by both academics and practitioners within organisations. In particular, Guest (1997, 2000) has used labour turnover levels as a key factor in his studies, linked to his definition of commitment entailing effort and motivation, and defining commitment more as a means of ensuring that, "employees stay long enough to repay the investment in training" (2000: 2). Kuvaas (2007: 22) also concluded that turnover intention and actual turnover are dependant on the quality of this relationship between employee and organisation, especially the employee's perception of how developmental is HRM policy.

Labour turnover statistics may be seized upon by those with a more positivistic approach to the evaluation of the effectiveness of HRM practices. However, the fact that labour turnover can be affected by so many variables means that the search for

quantifiable evidence is difficult and readily open to doubt. In Guest et al's later empirical study (2003) in assessing the links between best practice HRM and organisational commitment and performance, he concludes:

“the results are very mixed and on balance predominantly negative. The tests of association show a positive relationship between the use of more HR practices and lower labour turnover and higher profitability, but show no association between HR and productivity” (Guest et al, 2003: 307).

The declaration of a positive relationship, as opposed to quantifiable correlation is significant in pointing to the importance of labour turnover measurements but also the difficulties of quantitative methodologies in this subject area. Yet labour turnover continues to figure prominently, not only in the research arena, but also in the minds of organisational leaders, as exemplified in a speech by John Purcell based on his CIPD study (2004), in which he comments that the 12 major organisations participating were “passionate about the need to maximise performance and to contribute to business or organisational success” (Purcell, 2004: 15), and points to the lead indicators being measures of labour turnover, retention, absence.

3.5 Conclusion and chapter summary

Ambiguity and contradictions have been seen to enliven and enlighten the debate concerning both the concept of organisational culture and the models and meanings of human resource management. It is therefore unsurprising that the literature connecting HRM and organisational culture is also full of debate and ambiguity. From the broad conceptual discussions arise further discourse over the correlations

between culture, HR management, performance and commitment. Apart from public debate as to the merit of the 'excellence' culture writings of the early 1980's, there are continuing critiques of the way in which organisations and HR practitioners have applied the concepts of culture, often referring to the contradictions of the linkage between culture and HRM (Ogbonna, 1992; Meek, 1992; Mabey and Salaman, 1995; Tyson, 1995; Salaman, 2001).

Such questions have remained relevant due to the doubts over claims and counter-claims regarding the reality of the effectiveness of HRM and its links to cultural concepts. Whilst some writers promote the importance and significance of corporate or organisational culture as a managerial means of increasing employee commitment and performance through appropriate behaviour and attitudes (for example Alvesson, 1991; Willmott, 1993), others seek to expose such activity as a superficial managerial fashion which has more to do with manipulation of employees' behaviour and attitudes, and gaining resigned behavioural compliance but not attaining deeply embedded commitment in terms of underlying assumptions and shared values (for example, Meek, 1992; Ogbonna, 1992).

There is evidence from the recent empirical studies by Guest et al (2003) and Purcell (2004), approaching the issue from different methodological and epistemological positions, that the task of verifying the impact of organisational culture and associated HRM policies and practices on commitment and performance has led to results which at best could be described as variable. There is some evidence from the

research that culture and HRM initiatives can have a positive impact (by no means a direct correlation) on employee retention and labour turnover through increasing employee commitment / attachment to the organisation and its values and purpose. There remains a question over whether that commitment is based on deeply held assumptions and beliefs, or merely a more calculated, behavioural commitment borne out of necessity.

In referring back to the cultural theory of Douglas (1978, 1982), it is too convenient and simplistic to review the organisational culture and HRM relationship as one that conflates the *grid* cultural constraints with ‘hard’ HR systems and *Theory X*, and the *group* cultural dimensions with ‘soft’ HR systems and *Theory Y*. Indeed, it is better to consider these factors as two sides of the same coin. The common aim is to gain employee commitment, to achieve high performance, and ultimately to control a stable workforce.

HRM has a definite role as ‘agent’ of culture and the management of culture, and in its contemporary form is closely linked to corporate strategy and performance. As the policies and practices of HRM affect behaviour of the employees, and as culture has a significant role in determining worker behaviour, the connection is evident. Whether adopting predominantly ‘soft’ or ‘hard’ HRM approaches and managerial practices, the aim remains the same, one of developing a culture within the organisation which supports the desired employee behaviour required by the strategy and which gains the commitment necessary to maximise performance. The

achievement of this aim is partly conditional on the stability of the workforce, and high labour turnover is therefore to be avoided, as it prevents the development over time of a cohesive workforce and culture, able to leverage consensus, commitment and flexibility, and is therefore detrimental to performance (Legge, 2005; Storey, 2007). The virtuous cycle of developmental HRM policies incorporating high commitment and high performance practices leading to overall reduced turnover and improved organisational performance has continued to attract research-based proponents such as Appelbaum et al (2000), Shore et al (2006), Kuvaas (2007) and Paauwe (2004, 2008). The more recent research within the generic organisational behaviour domain has particularly noted affective commitment as critical to reducing labour turnover (Meyer et al, 2002; Kuvaas, 2007; Marchington and Cox, 2007; Paauwe, 2008; Yang, 2008).

As commitment level may be seen to be a precursor of labour turnover intentions, the nature of that commitment needs exploration. 'Resigned behavioural compliance' (Ogbonna and Wilkinson, 1990) may be seen less positively than attitudinal and affective commitment. But how is such attitudinal and affective commitment developed and replicated? Can a particular organisational culture and its implementation by HRM policies and practices really develop and change affective / attitudinal commitment and increase workforce stability as a result? Or, is it merely behavioural commitment masquerading as attitudinal because of other external factors such as a weak labour market and the threat of unemployment in a recession?

This chapter has also highlighted the view that different situations and different industrial sectors may require different approaches, the contingent strategy proposed by Purcell (2004). The service industry and service sector work have been identified as having particular characteristics which may impact on the consideration of culture, HRM and the labour turnover phenomenon. The hospitality industry context of this study has been introduced in terms of key employment issues and challenges, particularly in the areas of its labour market, labour process and levels of labour turnover. The next chapter will place the literature themes concerned with organisational culture and HRM within an analysis of labour turnover contextualised within service work and more specifically the hospitality industry's licensed retail pub sector.

Chapter 4

Labour Turnover, Service Work and the Hospitality Industry

4.0 Introduction

Having considered the interrelated concepts of organisational culture and human resource management (HRM), it is now necessary to examine the phenomenon of labour turnover within the context of service work and the hospitality industry, including the licensed retail sector of the industry. The dual emphasis on high employee commitment and the development of a cohesive workplace culture, points to the desirability of low labour turnover and high workforce stability. There is, however, a circularity and uncertain causal direction within these relationships (Legge, 2005). Stability and continuity within the workforce are desirable preconditions for the application of integrative corporate culture programmes and of 'soft' HRM policies designed to increase commitment and maximise performance. Legge asserts that, "commitment is an important predictor of intention to quit, which is invariably the best predictor of actual labour turnover" (2005: 217), though recognises the limitations of commitment level as a complete explanation of labour turnover.

Labour turnover levels have been adopted as measures of the effectiveness of HRM practices (e.g. Huselid, 1995). However, the quantification of the results of HRM initiatives are often inconclusive (Guest et al, 2003; Boxall and Purcell, 2003; Purcell, 2004). The relationship between commitment and labour turnover is

complex and subject to a range of variables related to the individual employee, the organisation and the external economic and labour market conditions. The specific context and characteristics of the sector and the organisation need to be evaluated in a contingency, ‘best fit’ approach, where the purpose of HRM is clearly determined (Deleri and Doti, 1996; Purcell, 2004). This contingent approach is in line with Korczynski’s (2002, 2007) proposal for understanding HRM and culture within service work. He urges a deeper awareness of the type of work being undertaken, the social and cultural relations within the organisation, and the external environment in which the employment is set.

This chapter summarises the critical characteristics and context of the service work environment. The chapter then discusses a number of labour turnover theories, and offers an assessment of literature concerned with the relationship of labour turnover to the concepts of culture and HRM practice within the hospitality industry in general, and the licensed retail sector specifically.

As this is the final chapter drawing directly from the secondary research, it ends with a summary of main themes that have arisen from the literature and subsequently informed the research aims and research questions, which are refined and re-stated prior to the Methodology and Research Methods chapter.

4.1 The context of service work

The growth of the service sector within developed economies has been a striking phenomenon of the late 20th century. The Labour Market Trends report for 2004 indicates that 80% of the UK's workforce is now employed within service industries. Crouch et al (1999) point to the particularly rapid growth of employment within retail, security, health care, personal care and in hospitality services. The service sector has been relatively under-researched compared to manufacturing and product markets, and the specific characteristics of service sectors, with the emphasis on person to person transactions is critical to an understanding of the importance of the links to organisational culture and workforce management (Redman and Matthews, 1998; Korczynski, 2002, 2005).

Literature in the area of service operations management provides a basis to recurring concerns over service quality and the capabilities of staff in terms of technical and interpersonal skills (Gronroos, 1983; Berry, Zeithaml and Parasuraman, 1985; Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry, 1990; Gummesson, 1991; Zeithaml and Bitner, 1996; Redman & Mathews, 1998; Fitzsimmons and Fitzsimmons, 2005). Other commentators emphasise the links between service quality and an appropriately supportive organisational culture, often termed a service culture (Schneider, 1980; Schneider and Bowen, 1985). There are further linkages made between service quality and appropriate employee management and HRM practices (see Wilkinson, Allen and Snape, 1991; Bowen and Lawler, 1992; Schneider and Bowen, 1993). Workforce instability threatens the core aim of the service encounter in delivering

customer satisfaction, and has been considered as the cause of a “cycle of failure” (Schlesinger and Heskett, 1991), especially in the maintaining of service quality and customer care (Redman and Matthews, 1998).

4.1.1 Service work characteristics

The distinctive differences between manufacturing and services have been frequently documented and considered (Berry et al, 1989; Zemke and Schaaf, 1989; Lehtinen and Lehtinen, 1991; Ritzer, 1993; Schneider and Bowen, 1995; Lashley, 1997; Crang, 1997; Korczynski, 2002, 2004, 2005; Van Looy, Gennel and Van Dierdonck, 2003). The differentiating characteristics of services are emphasised by a number of these writers, summarised by Reeves and Bednar (1994) as being: intangible (cannot be touched, an uncertain offer, no artifact as such); perishable (an unoccupied seat in a restaurant or on an airliner cannot be sold again); variable (the service encounter between service provider and customer is potentially inconsistent, perceptions and behaviour differing from one event to the next); and inseparable (the service provider and the customer are part of the same encounter, producer and consumer enjoined in the transaction). These characteristics point to the potential uncertainty and inconsistency of services, the vulnerability of the service encounter, and the dependency on the employee and the environment in order to meet the expectations of the customer.

Such issues lead to many of the difficulties faced by service firms in being able to guarantee service quality time after time. Further, being labour intensive and with the need to deal with fluctuations of business demand as well as inherent perishability, service firms are inclined to emphasise the minimisation of operating costs, from payroll to training costs, while still attempting to maintain the highest service quality. To facilitate this, managers have developed control-oriented practices and procedures that seek to standardise the product and service offer, often embedded within the concept of a brand (Levitt, 1972; Schmenner, 1986; Knowles and Howley, 2000). Service sector brands are frequently replicated in different locations and markets, and become multi-site chains (Olsen, Ching-Yick Tse and West, 1992; Jones, 1999). Managers seek to exert control over employees in order for them to deliver a pre-planned service delivery system that strictly follows a 'blueprint' of brand standards, including adherence to the espoused culture and values of the operation or brand (Cragg, 1997: 140).

This effort to diminish the uncertainty and potential inconsistency of service provision has been termed the industrialisation of services by Schmenner (1986), applying principles of mass production and Taylorism to service delivery. It is important to recognise the tensions here in the literature. On the one hand, commentators emphasise the essential behavioural differences between manufacturing and services in terms of distinctive characteristics such as the inseparability of employee and customer in service work, the need for a committed, motivated employee, dedicated to customer care (for example Heskett, 1986; Brown, Gummesson et al, 1991; Reeves and Bednar, 1994; Lashley, 1997; Worsfold, 1999).

On the other hand, the literature recognises management's imposition of planned, Fordist control mechanisms and management practices which seek to shape the employee's behaviour and reduce the employee's autonomy (for example Leidner, 1993, 1996; Ritzer, 1993, 1998; Bryman, 1995). This contradiction forms part of a root cause of service work difficulties, arising from management's customer-focused need to combine simultaneously the 'soft' HRM approaches of gaining commitment through cultural factors such as shared values and mutuality, with the 'hard' organisation-focused HRM approaches of ensuring compliance and efficiency in the achievement of the organisation's commercial goals.

4.1.2 Service work and the customer

These service encounter tensions have been described by Korczynski (2002: 58-83) in his concept of the 'customer-oriented bureaucracy.' As illustrated in Figure No. 7 below, he proposes that despite the potential for variability in each service transaction, the traditional and rational features of classic bureaucracy are still present in the rules and controls of the service 'blueprint' that need to be followed strictly by the employees. The rational service firm has many characteristics of a bureaucracy such as division of labour, defined work processes and measurements. However, Korczynski asserts, the customer is present in service work, requiring care and attention, whilst behaving simultaneously rationally and irrationally. The customer may be rational in requiring the purchase to fulfil and satisfy a substantive need, wanting the transaction to be efficiently concluded, satisfied that the product is effective and fit for purpose. The customer may be irrational in wishing to derive

pleasure and esteem from the situation, affected by the illusion of being ‘sovereign’ (‘the customer is king’), seeking emotional gratification and delight through the symbolic meanings and attributes of the product and the skills of the service worker. Building on the work of Ritzer (1999), Korczynski develops the notion of the customer’s desire for more than mere satisfaction but for enchantment, with the risk of bitter disillusionment if the expectation is dashed by poor service and the enchantment spell is broken.

Figure No. 7: Korczynski’s Customer-Oriented Bureaucracy

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Customer-oriented bureaucracy</i>
Key management role	Fashioning a fragile social order
HRM	Important as engendering dual-focused, efficient and customer-oriented worked behaviour, and as seeking to cope with ensuing tensions
Labour process	Quantity <i>and</i> quality focus
Basis of division of labour	Efficient task completion <i>and</i> customer relationship
Basis of authority	Rational-legal rules <i>and</i> customer
Form of control	Imperfect bureaucratic measurement <i>and</i> customer-related norms
Affect	Rationalised emotional labour
Flexibility	Maintaining internal stability <i>and</i> adapting to customer variability

Source: Korczynski (2002) p. 65.

The managerial and organisational implications return us to one of the key challenges of service work. On the one hand, a service firm wants its employees to go the extra mile to give high quality service to the customer, consolidating the customer's rational and irrational demands within an "enchanted myth of sovereignty" (Korczynski, 2002: 63-64). On the other hand, a service firm attempts to keep its cost base as low as possible, through actions such as stringent labour utilisation, minimisation of the wage bill, compromising on training, on materials and product quality. Legge (2005: 11) elegantly describes this scenario as:

"combining both 'hard' and 'soft' approaches to walk the tight-rope between the Scylla of bureaucratic controls and the Charybdis of necessarily allowing employees some discretion in managing the customer interface."

Korczynski (2002; 65) refers to the challenge for managers, including HR managers in such service organisations, attempting to manage employees in such a way that, "a fragile social order" is maintained. This requires management to assist the workforce in coping with the need to be efficient for the organisation within the operational controls and systems, as well as delighting the customer with their service skills; dealing with the simultaneous application of 'hard' and 'soft' management practices, as well as fulfilling the varying needs of the customer, the other key player in that social order (see also Jenkinson, 1995; Cartwright, 2000; Johnston and Clark, 2005).

The concept of the customer-oriented bureaucracy presents an analytical approach which embraces the characteristics and cultural features of service work. It is resonant of Giddens' theories on culture (1982, 1984), in aiding deeper understanding of the service encounter as a social system requiring structure and

order, and of the complex interrelationships and competencies therein. Korczynski's work has been influential on literature in the wider domain of HRM and organisational behaviour, featuring in works by Legge (2005) and Noon and Blyton (2007). In social anthropological terms, there is a social system within service work in which social interaction takes place, interaction between the organisation, the employees and the customers, each party bringing their own culture, background, experience and needs to the encounter. Elliston Allen (1971: 48) refers to the need for social anthropology to be applied more frequently to buyer-seller behaviour and customer behaviour in general, whilst Houghton and Tremblay (1994), building on work by Sasser (1976) and Shaffer (1984), in a study of hospitality industry culture, particularly point to the influence of the culture of the consumer in service situations, and it is argued here that this forms a further differentiation feature of service work.

Theoretical propositions for addressing the challenges faced by service firms and service workers in the drive for service quality have been somewhat prescriptive and normative constructions. Such propositions advocate an idealistic virtuous cycle from recruitment and selection, to training and development, complemented by an appropriate management style such as empowerment, embraced within a supportive but strong service-oriented culture, a service and profit chain that integrates with the customer at every stage (e.g. Heskett, 1986). However, the circumstances and context may well question this hopeful prescription. One example is the work of Ogbonna (1992), based on empirical studies within the retail service sector. Ogbonna points to the aim of the retail sector's senior management to develop a strong,

unifying corporate culture as proposed by the excellence literature, encouraging employee commitment and promoting the sharing of customer-oriented values.

However, the reality of the rhetoric to these retail employees was significantly tempered by a number of situational, environmental and cultural factors. Firstly, employees were often confronted by difficult, sometimes aggressive, one might conjecture after Korczynski, disenchanted customers. Secondly, the workforce itself was made up of a large number of part-time female workers who were more committed to earning some extra money for the household than to company mission and ethos. Thirdly, the company was challenged by the task of establishing a consistently unified, strong culture within the context of multi-site replication of branded retail outlets. Finally, the culture programme was detrimentally affected by an internal labour market seriously fragmented by very high labour turnover rates. Such a set of findings have consequences for the hospitality industry which shares many characteristics with retail, particularly in the multi-site, branded types of business as in restaurant groups and licensed retail chains. The hospitality industry workforce profile and labour process itself, as outlined in the previous chapter, has much in common with retail, particularly the high incidence of part-time and female employees and high labour turnover. These factors make the attainment of a strong, service-oriented culture all the more challenging.

4.1.3 Service culture

There is compatibility between the strong, corporate culture approach, and the desire within service firms to develop a service culture that is frequently defined as customer-driven. Businesses attempt to ensure service quality through a workforce that has appropriate attitudes, displays appropriate behaviours, shares the organisational values and is empowered to use discretion in the pursuit of customer service ‘excellence’ (Gronroos, 1990; Lashley, 1997; Ogbonna and Whipp, 1999). Gronroos (1990: 244) considers service culture to be one where providing good service is a norm shared by the members of the organisation. Lashley proposes the need for a “fit between the empowered organisation and the organisation’s culture” (1997: 112) stressing the associated requirement for high commitment-oriented HRM practices.

Lashley also addresses a familiar theme within the service sector and organisational culture commentators, namely the tensions that impact on service cultures, the danger of official and unofficial cultures developing within the firm, (citing Watson, 1993). He refers to the real potential for differentiated sub-cultures to develop their own unique characteristics and behaviours, fragmenting the culture espoused by senior management in their own rhetoric, echoing the ideas of Martin (1992). Lashley also points to the possibility of differentiation and fragmentation of an overarching organisation culture within the many service firms that are multi-divisional and multi-unit in structure, often dispersed over a wide geographical area. This issue is of special significance in the appreciation of organisation cultures

within the service industries, with the potential for a variation emerging in each business unit, in terms of workforce location, national and regional cultural influences, occupational and sub-cultural groups.

As evidenced by Lashley within the food service sector, the competitive hospitality industry is particularly prone to potential fragmentation, with successful service firm concepts invariably growing by replication to become multi-unit businesses both nationally and often internationally. Such cultural differentiation and fragmentation mitigate against the establishment of a strong service culture across many separate business outlets. Ogbonna and Whipp (1999) found a similar picture within the retail industry, their research within the supermarkets revealing a managerial attempt to react to high levels of competition through an emphasis on developing a strongly branded, replicated service culture across the outlets. They revealed an attempt by senior executives to build the integration between corporate strategy, corporate culture and HRM policy and practices, “developing cultures that support the values of customer service” (1999: 80). Again the links to ‘soft’ HRM philosophy were discovered, notably the need for clear all-embracing values and high commitment from the employees, further evidence that managers in the service sector remain committed to the corporate culture concept and associated HRM approaches.

4.1.4 Service culture and corporate branding

The development of highly prescribed brands within many service organisations in the latter part of the 20th century further consolidated the notion of a strong service

culture. Each brand was designed to possess distinctive attributes in line with consumer research, including the outward and behavioural manifestation of the values and standards of the brand. Branding gives management more control over the product and the nature of the service offer, particularly in multi-site, replicated operations (Sasser, 1976; Shaffer, 1984). It is firmly based in market research, responding to perceived consumer demands, and as such gives some control over the nature of the customer, the targeted market for the brand (Houghton and Tremblay, 1994). Sophisticated branding also attempts to prescribe in great detail the service standards and behaviours required of the employees and as such has the potential for influence over the workplace culture (Kotter and Heskett, 1992; Ritzer, 1998; Zeithaml and Bitner, 2003; De Chernatony and Cottam, 2008).

In this way, branding may be seen as part of a strong corporate culture approach but also may have impact as part of the 'realist' position of Ogbonna and Harris (2002) in the organisational culture debate. It is argued here that management may well influence and change culture through the brand's prescription and implementation, contrary to the traditional anthropological stance that denies the ability of management to change and manipulate culture. Differentiation into sub-cultures is likely to occur (management teams, work groups and occupational groups for example), but the underlying assumptions and behaviour of employees will be influenced by the brand's requirements in terms of its targeted customer-oriented values, standards, attitudes and behaviours. Branding thus gives management some apparent control and influence over cultural variables and in effect attempts to

integrate the 'players' in the service triumvirate of organisation, employee and customer.

Service industries such as retail and hospitality are typified by very strong corporate branding, as can be observed in most UK high streets, where the geographical replication of coffee shop, restaurant, pub and retail brands dominate the commercial offer. The links between corporate branding in service industries and organisational culture is a growing area of interest in the merging of literature and research within both marketing and organisational culture. The premise is that the success of a particular brand will be enhanced if supported by an appropriate organisational culture (Kotter and Heskett, 1992), and that in this way the values of the brand are endorsed by the values inherent in the culture so as to present the customer with a coherent service offer, characterised by distinctive values which appeal to that customer (see also Flamholtz, 2001).

Such pre-determined development and promotion of specific brand values and cultural features may have impact on the customer-oriented bureaucracy concept, with both employee and customer drawn together in a service encounter which has itself been (rationally) pre-determined to some extent by the bureaucracy. This aspect will be examined as part of the empirical research for this thesis within the branded licensed retail sector, a sector where the potential exists for particularly close relationships between staff and customers in an 'occupational community' (Sandiford and Seymour, 2007). There is a degree of recognition on both sides that

the service encounter will comprise of relatively clearly defined elements, the 'predictability' dimension of Ritzer's McDonaldization thesis (1996: 79). This predictability also includes the expected level of rational satisfaction and irrational enchantment. In this way the brand defines and prescribes critical aspects of the social setting in which the service is both produced and consumed (Crang, 1997: 143). Management has the ability to shape the social setting of the brand, not only by the employment and development of an appropriate workforce, but by recognising and responding to the needs and culture of the customer. As Houghton and Tremblay conclude, "the capacity to manage the culture of consumer inputs will remain an important determinant of competitive advantage for hospitality managers" (1994: 344).

Crang highlights the importance of employees in tourism and hospitality brands in terms of them playing a role in the setting developed, which he sees as a, "cultural reconstruction of the workplace as stage" (1997:141). He considers that service encounters require a cultural discourse between the customer and the employee, the customer establishing the precise components of the product or brand, whilst the employee represents the brand, negotiating with the customer concerning what exactly is being offered, what is possible and what is not. Zeithaml and Bitner (2003:318) also refer to the increasing importance of employees in the branding and marketing aspects of service businesses, describing appropriate staff as "walking billboards". Their approach stresses the outward, extrinsic manifestation of an employee's involvement in espousing the brand proposition, whereas Crang's analysis of employment in tourism focuses on the intrinsic nature of the work and

refers to the 'gazing' concept of Urry (1990). Here, the employee works under the collective gaze of the customer in a shared encounter, each player establishing their part and relationship within that encounter. Crang concludes that this type of employment is more than a merely rational and economic one, but a cultural one as well, the labour itself being a cultural representation.

There is recent, research-based evidence that a correlation exists between appropriate organisational culture and corporate brand profitability (De Chernatony and Cottam, 2008), and that it is vital for the brand in question to recruit and train employees who possess not only the skills of the job, but can share the values of brand and culture. It has also been reported that such staff display better retention, lower labour turnover levels (Sheridan, 1992). In this way, the values of brand and organisational culture are developed and reinforced over time and the delivery of an appropriate service quality more likely to be maintained. This person-organisation 'fit' is a concept that will also be discussed later in connection with labour turnover in the hospitality sector. There is research output from other domains which suggests that employee stress, burn-out and labour turnover are all reduced where the values of the employee and the values of the organisation are in alignment (O'Reilly et al, 1991; Ostroff et al, 2005; Bellou, 2009). Such employees are likely to ensure that the requirements of the service culture and service standards are maintained, and are motivated to stay with the brand longer.

4.1.5 Service culture contradictions

The scenario of a strongly motivated workforce that is customer-focused and highly committed, underpinned by an equally strong and shared service culture is a theme discussed by Korczynski (2002). He cites the work of Gronroos (1990) on the defining and development of a service culture, seen as a set of behavioural norms, both internally (employee to employee) and externally (employee to customer). Korczynski relates a 'win: win: win' scenario in the service triangle: a 'win' for customers who benefit from the excellent service from staff; a 'win' for the staff who are themselves supported and encouraged by appropriate HRM practices; and a 'win' for the service firm that increases its revenues and profits due to satisfied and loyal customers. This normative approach echoes the work of Heskett (1986) and his service profit chain, once again overlapping with the 'excellence' literature and 'soft' HRM and corporate cultural dimensions.

The challenge for such normative approaches is that the characteristics of the service sector create a complex and volatile situation. As exemplified by Ogbonna's earlier conclusions from within the supermarket sector there are clear contradictions and dilemmas arising out of a desire for a strong service culture linked to certain 'ideal HRM goals' (1992: 91). More specifically, he found that the managerial aim for high quality service through 'trusted' employees possessing enhanced interpersonal skills following attendance on training courses, was contradicted by the need for staff to deal with difficult and abusive customers. This led to stress and tension in the job as employees attempted to deal with such awkward situations, trying to keep their

emotional cool and act appropriately, many staff referring to their capabilities as actors and actresses. Further contradiction was noted in the situation where the HRM rhetoric of trusting the highly committed workforce was undermined by increased quality control initiatives, notably the observation and supervision of staff in service encounters such as at check-out, and by the 'under-cover' surveillance of mystery shoppers. The aim of developing cultural replication across a large number of outlets was also contradicted by take-overs and expansion, with the cultural mix being impacted upon by different groups of employees with different backgrounds, ethnicity factors, and high rates of labour turnover.

Once again the similarity with the hospitality sector is noteworthy. It is challenging in itself to develop an integrated organisational culture across a multi-unit company with perhaps hundreds of separate business units. The challenge is greatly increased when a high rate of labour turnover is factored in, constantly changing the composition of the workforce, a workforce already consisting of a hugely disparate group of people, often possessing doubtful levels of commitment to the job and the enterprise. A strong internal labour market, with the opportunity for development within the company across its many branches is threatened by high levels of labour turnover, and by high levels of part-timers who only wish to work in a particular locality as with many female workers.

In reviewing and analysing the issues impacting upon organisational cultures within the service economy, it is important to note the tensions between the strong,

integrated culture perspective and the characteristics and complexities presented by the contemporary service sector. Integrationists urge a strong and consistent expression of values, beliefs and behavioural manifestations of the desired culture, but the service sector provides a range of factors that mitigate against such an approach. It would seem that the anthropological discipline gives hope for understanding more deeply how such organisational cultures work, recognising the importance of sub-cultures in such a fragmented and non-standard workforce. The desire for a service culture is predicated on an obsession with customer service and service quality. However, high labour turnover places such a goal at risk. Schlesinger and Heskett (1991) concur with this danger, highlighting that such high turnover leads to low productivity, poor service, dissatisfied and abusive customers, and indeed to even more unhappy employees, thus adding to the labour turnover cycle.

A recurring theme of the literature concerning service work and service culture is the potential for 'unhappy employees'. The highly competitive environment of the service sector has led to a reliance on the psychological nature of the interaction between employee and customer, and the behavioural capabilities of employees. As noted by Noon and Blyton (2007: 188), "employees' emotional performance is designed to induce or reinforce positive feelings within the customer." All these social interactions have the potential to create employee stress through being confronted by repeated emotional and psychological challenges. Consideration of the concept of 'emotional labour' is essential in an understanding of service work, organisational culture in service firms and the service worker retention question.

4.1.6 Managing emotions in service encounters

The importance of human emotion in person-to-person service encounters is frequently recounted in the service management literature. The service quality models of Heskett (1986) and Parasuraman et al (1988) are predicated on particular service staff behaviours and manifestations of service-oriented attitudes, such as empathy and sincerity (see also Lashley, 1997). There is a need for complex behavioural displays from service workers, requiring considerable emotional maturity and interpersonal skill, managing feelings, being able to stay calm or welcoming, helpful and professional, the sort of characteristics desired by the organisation and communicated through its cultural rhetoric and people-oriented policies and practices.

This 'emotional labour' is also set within a service industry context of minimising costs in sectors where large labour forces are normally required and profit margins are relatively small. The hospitality sector is typical of this, where total labour costs are often the major operating expense, yet where a competitive environment means that service quality and customer service are considered paramount. Lashley (1997) refers to a 'service factory' example of a typical fast food outlet characterised by very strong controls, systems and culture, a 'hard' HRM approach in which as little discretion as possible is left to the service worker, even down to the behavioural 'script' desired by the company when dealing with the customer, as in 'have a nice day' (see also Leidner, 1993, 1996; Mann, 1999; Lashley, 2002). The inference is that standardised, branded operations require a replication of all aspects including the

emotional display, the social setting's atmosphere and the service culture (Ritzer, 1993).

However, many hospitality employees find themselves in a service operation classified by Lashley (1997) as a 'service shop', such as a full service restaurant, needing to build a relationship with the customer, using discretion where necessary to ensure high levels of customer service, maximising sales and profitability through technical and interpersonal skills. Such a task clearly adds to the pressure and emotional demands of the service encounter. There is a more complex and diverse service product and offer, the relationship with the customer is longer in duration and more diverse, with more social interaction and a wider range of services than in more standardised operations (Chandrasekar and Dev, 1989).

As well as the simultaneity of the encounter with the 'inseparable' customer, the service worker is dealing with those other key characteristics of services, their intangibility, perishability and variability (Reeves and Bednar, 1994). This variability factor is particularly relevant when dealing with the emotional aspects of the service encounter, customers being potentially both variable and irrational, leading to highly differing and confusing behaviours with which the service employee has to deal effectively. In the hospitality industry for example, apart from the specific likes and dislikes of different customers, a waiter or waitress might be serving a range of customers in terms of their purpose for being there and their specific needs (the complexity and diversity factors related by Chandrasekar and Dev, 1989).

4.1.7 Emotional labour

The emotional challenge has been increasingly seen as a reason for serious worker dissatisfaction, high absenteeism and high labour turnover within those sectors where so-called ‘emotional labour’ is paramount (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993, 1995; Fineman, 1993; Mann, 1997, 2007). Within the discipline of industrial psychology, emotional labour came to prominence with the work of Arlie Russell Hochschild and her 1983 publication, “The Managed Heart”. Hochschild professed that service workers, notably airline cabin crew in her own primary research, were required to conform to very prescribed displays and behaviours as laid down by the societal, organisational, or occupational cultures and norms, but that often such conformity clashes with the worker’s own inner emotions and feelings. Hochschild’s thesis is that such a ‘clash’ leads to inner conflict and emotional difficulties. There is also reference to the work of Goffman (1959), aliking workers to actors, performing on a service sector stage (also see Crang, 1997), performing, pretending and faking emotions.

Such emotional acting might be skillfully contrived (‘surface’) or a more deeply felt response, induced by empathy and the deliberate marshalling of appropriate inner feelings. The benefits of ‘being yourself’ and having fun at work within emotionally demanding service jobs are attracting considerable recent scholastic attention, as in Seymour and Sandiford (2005) and later in a special edition of the journal *Employee Relations* (Bolton and Houlihan, 2009; Fleming and Sturdy, 2009; Plester, 2009). A significant outcome is the suggestion that customers much prefer natural, unscripted

employee behaviour to that which is packaged and culturally contrived within training programmes.

In connection with the concept of acting and emotional labour within a service industry role is the concept of 'aesthetic labour', an approach which seeks to employ staff with a physical appearance in tune with the brand, its image, standards and market segment (Nickson et al, 2001; Nickson and Warhurst, 2007). Research in the hospitality industry discovered that employers' demands for staff who looked right, sounded right, and fitted the concept were particularly prevalent in the very stylised operation of boutique hotels, and that this affected recruitment and selection processes (Nickson and Warhurst, 2007). These interesting findings are in line with Hochschild's assertion that the broader concept of emotional labour is, "the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display" (1983: 7). Such displays of emotional labour through appearance, verbal and non-verbal behaviours have been noted by a number of researchers and writers within the hospitality and tourism sectors (Mars and Nicod, 1984; Van Maanen and Kunda, 1989; Leidner, 1991; Lashley, 1997). The hospitality industry also requires its service staff, whether food service or bar staff, to engage in emotional labour for prolonged periods, often in high volume businesses, learning the emotional 'rules' of the organisation, being on the 'front line' (Seymour and Sandiford, 2005; Taylor et al, 2009). Noon and Blyton (2007: 206) also point to the gender imbalance in services like hospitality and licensed retail pubs, with women making up the majority of a workforce and required to engage in extended periods of emotional labour.

Mann (1997) provides an overview of the fundamental emotional labour literature and its relevance to the service industry, citing (p.9) the work of Bowen and Schneider (1988), Brown et al (1991) and Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) in a summary of the links to service encounters. The emotional labour challenge of having to manage one's own feelings and emotions is crucial due to the employee's role in representing the organisation in the service encounter, in enchanting the customer with the less tangible aspects of the service. Mann also refers to the increasing emotional pressures on employees because of the demands of organisational culture programmes, exemplified by mission statements which stress emotional factors such as enthusiasm, helpfulness, courtesy, team spirit and friendliness:

“Any attempt to change culture is therefore an attempt to manage emotion. Culture influences not only what people think, say and do but also what they feel” (Mann, 1997: 10).

Much of the comment on emotional labour, as with Hochschild herself, highlights the negative potential of the concept, that the experience almost certainly leads to employee inner conflict, alienation and dissatisfaction. It is noteworthy that Korczynski (2002:143) mounts a critique of this premise, in part considering that a flaw in Hochschild's argument is its absolutist stance, implying that, “the subjective experience of emotional labour will be necessarily harmful.” Korczynski cites the work of Granovetter (1985) and the concept of ‘social embeddedness’ in proposing that within the economic interaction of the service encounter, there will be some employees who gain pleasure and satisfaction in successfully managing emotions and behaviour, embedding a social interaction within the economic framework. Other positive aspects in learning to cope with emotional labour consequences have

also been cited as an increased solidarity of the work group (Korczynski, 2003), the mutual support and empathy between colleagues, as well as managerial approaches to ensuring staff take sufficient breaks, have access to relaxation areas, even have specific places to let off steam and vent frustrations (see also Noon and Blyton, 2007: 201).

The ability of service organisations to cope effectively with emotional labour tensions and stress and the other challenges to service workers are frequently seen as an HRM responsibility (Zemke and Schaaf, 1989), while Seymour and Sandiford (2005: 554) confirmed that large branded pub companies were most likely to give formal training to staff in such matters as interpersonal skills and customer care. Korczynski's customer-oriented bureaucracy sees HRM as coping with the ensuing tensions of staff under the dual pressure of efficiency and customer service, whilst seeking to maintain internal stability and flexibility of the workforce (2002: 65-75). A breakdown of the 'fragile social order' will occur if the employees walk away from the tension and emotional stress of service work. The importance of workforce stability and acceptable retention levels is once again brought to the fore, and the next section will address this central theme of the thesis, the phenomenon of labour turnover with particular reference to service work and the hospitality industry.

4.2 Labour turnover

Workforce stability is required to ensure the development of a cohesive workplace culture and effective work groups, contributing to fulfilment of the commitment and performance aims of the interconnected concepts of organisational culture and HRM. However, the hospitality industry is reported by successive C.I.P.D. surveys as having consistently the highest labour turnover levels across all economic sectors, an annual turnover rate two to three times the national average (C.I.P.D., 2004). Industry reports and research output, also reviewed in Chapter 3, also point to the damaging influence of high turnover and workforce instability on customer service and commercial viability. This exploration of the relationship between culture and labour turnover within the employment context of service work in the hospitality industry needs to be informed by literature specific to the phenomenon of labour turnover.

Given the potential impact of labour turnover on organisational effectiveness, it is not surprising that there has been a substantial amount of research into this phenomenon (Price, 1977; Mobley, 1982; Hom and Griffith, 1995; Deery and Shaw, 1997; Morrell et al, 2001, 2004). Effective acquisition and management of the human resource is a major concern of managers and their organisations, critical to the success of the enterprise. Therefore, the incidence and nature of labour turnover needs to be analysed, so that action may be taken to influence the turnover and its potential impacts on key result areas such as profitability and quality (Dalton, Krackhardt and Porter, 1981). Labour turnover is seen as a key measure or index for

the success of an organisation (Vandenberg and Nelson, 1999), and in a service industry such as hospitality, with traditionally high levels of turnover, the management of that measurement is crucially important in maintaining service standards and in reducing the direct and indirect costs (Lucas, 2004). However, the phenomenon remains elusive in terms of the existence of a universally accepted model for its understanding, for facilitating the prediction, explanation and management of why workers leave their employment (Price and Mueller, 1986; Abelson, 1987; Griffith and Hom, 1988; Sheridan, 1992; Aquino et al, 1997).

4.2.1 Models of labour turnover

From the review of research output on labour turnover for this thesis, four distinct approaches to its conceptualisation have been identified. At a fundamental but important epistemological level, there has been consideration of whether or not labour turnover is avoidable, whether or not it is detrimental, considering the positive as well as the negative effects of labour turnover (Mobley, 1982; Abelson, 1987; Wood, 1992; Manley, 1996; Deery and Shaw, 1997). Whilst the negativity of high turnover dominates this literature, there is also recognition that some positive effects can be gained by a degree of mobility in the labour force, such a surge of fresh energy, enthusiasm and ideas. There is also recognition that what is considered high turnover in one sphere of activity may be considered low in another. Abelson (1993) raises the prospect of turnover norms developing within firms and within industries. However, Abelson also warns of norms becoming tacitly accepted by managers who

become resigned to its level and occurrence, its traditional patterns and the inevitable consequences.

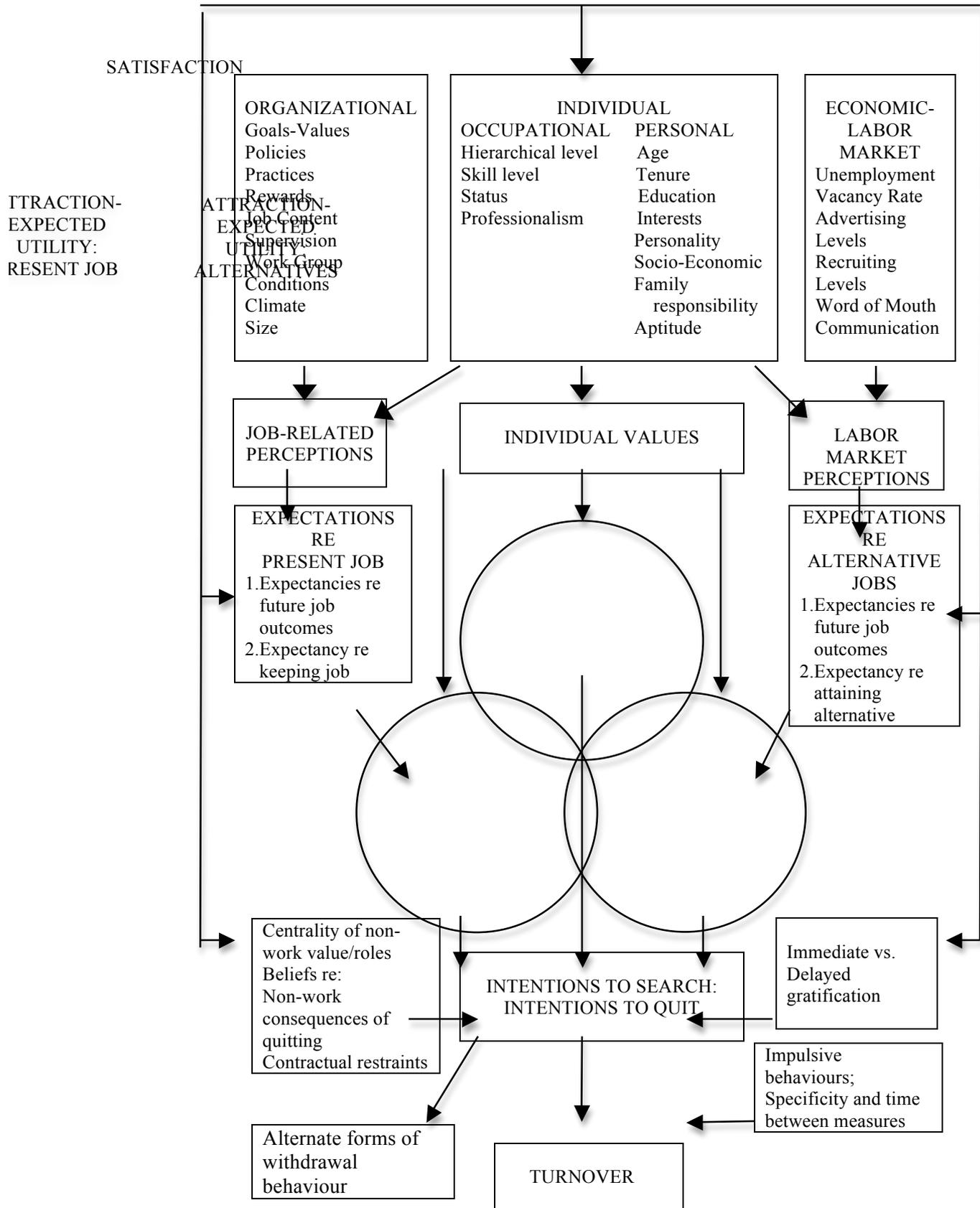
A second approach is to consider the employee turnover subject from the perspective of a research tradition concerned with the labour market, an essentially economic analysis encompassing external variables such as labour supply, labour demand, local employment and unemployment trends and wage levels (Lawler, 1981; Griffith and Hom, 1988; Hom and Griffith, 1995). This approach is concerned with modeling the labour market and assessing the predictability of labour turnover. It is a largely positivistic methodology that fails to account for the humanistic, more social and psychological aspects of turnover such as an employee's personal, normative commitment to fellow-workers and the organisation.

A third framework for analysis is more concerned with the internal variables within an organisation, and with the employee's intentions and decisions over staying or leaving the employment. It is more concerned with psychological matters than economic and labour market factors. These variables include job satisfaction (Mobley, Horner and Hollingsworth, 1978; Price and Mueller, 1981, 1986; Griffith and Hom, 1995); the 'fit' between organisation and its values and the individual employee and their personal values (O'Reilly et al, 1991; Sheridan, 1992); and the employee's commitment to the organisation (Porter et al, 1974; Kerr and Slocum, 1987; Allen and Meyer, 1990; Meyer and Allen, 1991; Griffith and Hom, 1995; Khatri et al, 2001; Meyer et al, 2002). Research output within this domain

emphasises more the non-instrumental orientations to work, that work is not just a calculative economic exchange of labour for reward, but is concerned with other factors such as group activities and relationships. With regard to the current study, this third framework is significant in that it relates to the previously considered area of employee commitment, work group and sub-culture development, prevalent in concepts of organisational culture and in contemporary HRM models.

A comprehensive and synthesising model concerning a better understanding of the causes of labour turnover which attempts to combine the main aspects of both the economic model of the labour market and the socio-psychological perspectives of the organisation and employee, is the “Expanded Model” of Mobley, Griffeth, Hand and Meglino (1979). This model is reproduced below as Figure No. 8. This comprehensive model provides a summary of input variables such as the organisation, the labour market and the individual, the latter in terms of occupational and personal attributes and demographics. It proceeds to trace the factors which affect the employee and which lead to the crucial ‘intention to quit’ and job search stage, the precursors to the actual labour turnover. It categorises the key determinants on an individual’s intention to leave employment as job satisfaction; the individual’s expectations regarding other jobs within the same organisation; their expectations regarding alternative opportunities in other organisations within the labour market; and finally, but importantly in the cultural context of this thesis, their individual values, beliefs and non-work values. It is a model which synthesises a number of themes that have arisen from the review of organisational culture and HRM literature.

Figure No. 8: The Expanded Model of Labour Turnover (Mobley et al, 1979)



Chapter 5

Methodology and Research Methods

5.0 Introduction

The pre-eminent question conveyed from the review of literature above concerns the relationship between organisational culture and labour turnover. This chapter outlines the research philosophy, the methodological framework and the research methods deployed in carrying out the investigation. The primary research is detailed in terms of the mode of inquiry, the data collection and analysis stages, outlining the framework for the investigation. The chapter demonstrates how the review of literature on the concept of organisational culture and its linkages with models of human resource management influenced an exploration of the recurring challenge of labour turnover in the service sector. In particular, the inquiry is located within the context of service work, specifically the hospitality industry, seeking new insights into the links between organisational culture and the labour turnover phenomenon, to the benefit of both scholastic and practitioner communities.

5.1 Research paradigms

Guba and Lincoln (1998) refer to the nature of the inquiry paradigm as being informed by three critical questions, the ontological, the epistemological and the methodological. The answers to these questions, “define for inquirers what it is they are about, and what falls within and outside the limits of legitimate inquiry” (1998:

200). A consideration of the researcher's ontological assumptions about the nature of the reality of service work in the hospitality industry motivated the desire to know how things really work, how things really are, but recognising that the subject areas of organisational culture and HRM present degrees of ambiguity, complexity and uncertainty. This uncertainty stems in part from the researcher's world view that in most cases a high level of labour turnover is a negative impact on a business, but that despite much research, and implementation by firms of a range of HR initiatives, the problem remains and new approaches should still be sought.

The researcher's ontological assumptions are derived from past experience as both practitioner in the hospitality industry and academic in the field of service industry management. These assumptions underpinned an aim to seek alternative approaches to the challenge of labour turnover in service work, especially within the hospitality industry. An epistemological position developed in line with an exploration of phenomenon, rather than positivism, in terms of how to conduct such inquiries, how to discover, "the ways that people make sense of the world especially through sharing their experiences with others via the medium of language" (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe, 2002:39). The investigative work is firmly founded on the view that knowledge is acquired by discovering more about the meanings attributed by employees to the work in hospitality, by exploring their level of commitment and the values underpinning their behaviour. The researcher's own experiences needed to be considered reflectively and objectively, so that bias and prejudice were mitigated.

This initial period of reflection and rising self-awareness was augmented by discussions with senior colleagues within the University of Brighton and within industry. From these early exchanges, a philosophical research position developed which can be described as a desire to approach and learn more about the issue of labour turnover from a different perspective, embracing sources of information from the literature and concepts of other academic domains. The impact of the work of Douglas (1978, 1982, 1992) and Mars and Nicod (1984) has been made clear in Chapter 2, emanating from the cultural or social anthropology discipline; also the work of Korczynski (2002) from a sociological perspective. Mars and Nicod (1984) and later Deery and Shaw (1999) indicate the impact of organisational culture on patterns of labour turnover, Deery and Shaw stating that there has been little research into “the relationship between the organizational culture and employee turnover” (1999: 388). When considering this potential knowledge gap in the research and literature along with the emerging models of the importance of organisational culture as a component of HRM approaches to gaining employee commitment, a framework for the study took shape. The framework was constructed on the principle of merging ideas and concepts from different social science domains.

This approach supported an interpretative and phenomenological position, seeking to explain how employees ascribe meaning to their work experience, as opposed to a positivistic paradigm of arguing that phenomena can be explained in terms of cause and effect, an objective reality (Bryman, 2004). Morgan and Smircich (1980) emphasised six ontological positions, from subjectivist assumptions to objectivist assumptions, a continuum which ranging from the extreme subjectivist approach of

projection of human imagination, through to the increasingly objectivist and positivistic assumptions related to concrete processes and structure. In taking an ontological position on 'what there is to know', the research project for this thesis determined that there is more to be known about people and their employment within the particular sphere of service work. In terms of the proposed study into the hospitality sector and the workplace issues surrounding labour turnover intentions and culture, a more subjectivist and exploratory ontological dimension was deemed appropriate, eliciting feedback from individual employees on their entry into the workplace and their experience of being a part of its work groups and culture. The literature reviewed for the thesis supports an approach that seeks to discover the feelings and perceptions of the individual employees within their workplace culture, understanding their behaviour and how this affects their intentions regarding their employment.

Epistemologically, the researcher faced the question of, 'how can we learn about, know about the world'. The researcher addressed the inquiry from the perspective that knowledge from an empirical workplace phenomena such as culture and turnover intention may be limited in the ability to be generalisable, but the findings would be reality for those employees concerned. The author's past experience and ontological assumptions needed to be balanced by a detachment in the primary research in the field if the aim was to know 'how things really work' for the individual respondents. It is important to reflect on the nature of the relationship between the researcher and the topic to be researched. An awareness of the researcher's own value-laden background and experiences is important. The

researcher needs to be involved, but also needs to be able to stand back and ask value-free questions concerning “what can be known” (Guba and Lincoln, cited in Denzin and Lincoln, 1998: 201). The researcher must be aware of reflexivity, aware of their own effect on the research process, from assumptions and values to their very presence in the field and the language medium between the researcher and subjects, such an important aspect of qualitative methods (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000; Holman and Thorpe, 2003).

It follows methodologically that as the researcher believed that new perceptions and insights would emerge from the inquiry, there needed to be some form of transactional dialogue between researcher and subject(s). This dialogue would aim to obtain situational information by, “soliciting emic viewpoints to assist in determining the meanings and purposes that people ascribe to their actions” (Guba and Lincoln, 1998: 205). This confirms an interpretivistic paradigm (Henderson, 1990; Bryman, 2004), referred to as phenomenological and naturalistic (Finn et al, 2000), arguing that this non-positivistic approach offers richer insight than the positivistic within a complex situation such as the social entity of the workplace. The need is to learn how individuals interpret their social surroundings, how they make sense of a social reality that “is multiple, divergent and interrelated” (Finn et al, 2000).

This methodological paradigm seeks to discover how individuals describe their reality, and is characterised by rich data from the dialogue, quotations from the subjects within a reality such as the workplace, from which new perceptions emerge.

Silverman (2006: 43) characterises the strength of qualitative research as, “its ability to study phenomena which are simply unavailable elsewhere.” This hermeneutic approach has in the past been somewhat dominated by the positivistic paradigm but is growing in its usage within business and management research (Gummesson, 1991; Ingram, 1997; Redman and Matthews, 1998; Saunders et al, 2000; Easterby-Smith et al, 2002; Patton, 2002). Simmons (2004) relates this approach as an example of critical social theory, a combination of qualitative methodology and hermeneutic strategy, attempting to interpret, understand and explain why people act as they do in social situations.

The methodological approach seeks to focus on meanings, making sense of what is going on, and seeking to develop ideas and insights from the rich data acquired (Easterby-Smith et al, 1991; 2002). The research needs to show how individuals, in this case, employees, interpret their social world, how they describe it, much in the same way that Geertz (1973) proposes the ‘thick description’ approach to his interpretive theory of culture. In particular, the research seeks to know more about the work experience which leads an employee to the decision to search for another job, the ‘intention to quit’ moment. The cultural anthropological literature reviewed for this thesis endorses an exploratory and qualitative research design. Mars and Nicod (1984:2), from their anthropological and ethnographic perspective, stress the need to build up a picture of the setting in which the employees work and inhabit, “to elicit the key values and norms (often unstated) on which social life is based.”

Consideration of these inquiry paradigms led to the adoption of a qualitative framework of methods (that fit the predetermined methodology) for the primary research, which will be detailed later in this chapter. Miles and Huberman (1994:17) confirm that such approaches are more suited to, “exploring exotic cultures, understudied phenomena, or very complex social phenomena.” As Guba and Lincoln (1998:198) emphasise:

“The etic (outsider) theory brought to bear on an inquiry by an investigator (or the hypotheses proposed to be tested) may have little or no meaning within the emic (insider) view of studied individuals, groups, societies or cultures.”

5.2 The framework of the literature

The literature review was extremely influential in the development of the methodology and the ensuing research methods design. The review of organisational culture models and the connectivity to contemporary human resource management models confirmed the critical link to strategy, commitment and performance within an Anglo-American setting (Beaumont, 1992; Ogbonna, 1992; Appelbaum et al, 2000; Storey, 2005; Schuler and Jackson, 2005). The potential influence of management policies and practices in affecting the values, behaviour and attitudes of employees and work groups was evident as was the contemporary notion of high performance work systems and high commitment. The latter was a significant link to the specific question of labour retention and turnover. The implications for the service sector and hospitality industry are connected with the competition-driven goal of service quality and the development of service culture values within a customer-oriented encounter. This encounter is complicated by the organisational need to minimise costs as well as provide excellent customer service. This tension

also raised the question of the stress and work pressures of the service personnel, and the concepts of emotional labour and managing emotions, with the recognition that emotional displays at work have particular relevance to service work.

The study of organisational culture revealed many strands of learning which brought a new dimension to the thesis. The seminal social and cultural anthropological work of Douglas (1970, 1973) and Geertz (1973) gave a perspective to the nature of research into organisational cultures. The Douglas models concerning *grid* and *group* and small group theory have been highly influential, particularly as they also formed the methodological basis of the Mars and Nicod study within the hotel industry of the 1980's. The *grid / group* model has been specifically incorporated in the research design. The broader culture literature stresses the importance of the work group or team, the sub-culture which is fundamental in the development of an anthropological interpretation of organisational culture. The methodological approach was significantly informed and enlightened by the conceptual divide between the anthropologically-oriented perspective of culture and the very different interpretation that underpinned the corporate, 'strong' culture concept. This distinction also has bearing on the inquiry paradigm, the notion of culture as a variable being firmly linked to the positivistic position, whilst the 'something an organisation is' concept, a more anthropological 'root metaphor' process, firmly lying within the phenomenological position (see Legge, 2005: 220).

As has been discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, workplace teams are themselves critical in the continuity, reproduction and socialisation aspects of the culture, and of direct relevance to the HRM, commitment and labour turnover topics. Workplace groups develop the values and norms that may ultimately determine the service quality experienced by the customer. The work of Bate (1992) is important here in his work concerning orientations and values within organisational culture, particularly the affective orientation regarding how group members become emotionally bound together. As with the Douglas *grid* and *group* model, the strength of association between group members emerges as a crucial aspect of the analysis of culture.

5.3 Methodological developments in hospitality research

Within the specific academic domain of service work and hospitality, researchers and commentators have recently been considering and developing alternative epistemological frameworks for research within the field (Ingram, 1997; Brotherton, 1999; Lashley, 2000; Morrison, 2002; Lashley, 2004; Lashley, Lynch and Morrison, 2007). There has been increasing support and recommendation for qualitative methods as being highly appropriate in exploring the “inherent richness of hospitality and tourism activities” (Ingram, 1997: 94). Morrison emphasises the relationship between hospitality and the social sciences, “particularly in the form of human behaviour in various contexts” (2002: 166). She concludes that research within the hospitality domain has progressed, but is at the ‘still maturing’ stage, still attempting to free itself from functionalism and vocational paradigms (see also Airey and Tribe, 2000).

Morrison proposes the need for more precision in definition, including, “hospitality as a differentiated form of human exchange”, facilitating the “comparative investigation of hospitality as business and cultural phenomenon” (2002: 167). She urges that future research strategies and methodologies look beyond the internal domain, “through strategic alliances within the wider social science landscape” (p. 168). Brotherton (1999) also emphasises the need for a study of service work and hospitality to be broader than purely practitioner management of a sector, more toward the exploration of a phenomenon within a social sciences framework. This essentially wider critical perspective is a theme of the more recent work of Lashley et al (2007), highlighting the need for researchers to, “extend the conception of the hospitality subject boundaries” (p.190), and concluding that the maturing of hospitality research lies in viewing it through ‘a social lens’:

“The value has been revealed of adopting highly qualitative and imaginative research methods as well as the advantages of critical reflection and unifying assorted bodies of literature. Multidisciplinary perspectives need to be embraced with associated, more inclusive literatures informing analyses.”
(Lashley, Lynch and Morrison, 2007: 190).

The wide-ranging review of research output by Guerrier and Deery (1998) summarises many of the most researched employee management themes within the sector, and whilst labour turnover is well represented as one of those themes, there is a recommendation that alternative approaches be explored, including the links with organisational cultural theory, confirming the gap in knowledge. The need for more research into the hospitality and tourism sector in relation to employment and culture is encouraged by a number of key authors (Watson and d’Annunzio-Green, 1996; Deery and Shaw, 1997, 1999; Crang, 1997; McGunnigle and Jameson, 2000; Ogonna and Harris, 2002; Kelliher and Riley, 2003).

The collective works of the Australian-based academics Deery, Iverson and Shaw have been significantly influential in their development of the concept of a turnover culture within the hotel industry. The characteristics of such a culture will impact on the primary research in allowing a loose framework for inquiry at individual and group level regarding critical turnover factors, for example, of intention to leave, internal labour market, job satisfaction and the corresponding culture factors of induction processes, turnover norms, work norms and values, rituals, myths and communication (Deery and Shaw, 1997: 381). Deery and Shaw opt for a quantitative methodology, but recognise that there is considerable debate about research methods in the service industries, referring to Smircich as an example of a writer in favour of qualitative techniques.

Their reliance on a quantitative instrument is understandable as their aim was to identify the absolute existence of a labour turnover culture and to measure turnover culture across a number of hotel businesses and employees. A later study into the specific retention strategies adopted in one hotel company took the form of a case study with data collected from documentary evidence and structured interviews (Deery, 2002), affording more case-specific detail and insight into the nature and management of staff turnover. In this way, qualitative methods have given validity to the perspective that the study has gained, “access to the experiences of those in the research setting” (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe, 2002:53).

To find out more about the employment and social experiences of employees in the cultural research setting of the hospitality industry is a key motive for this research study. Knowledge of the relationship between culture and labour turnover is ambiguous and uncertain. In order to discover more about the relationship, research methods would need to focus on the individual employee and their journey from recruitment onwards. Helms and Stern (2001) highlight the need to consider the cultural background of individual employees in their study of restaurant employees and labour turnover. They comment on the importance of factors such as past experiences, demographic profile, length of service and the influence of sub-culture. This study sets out to discover more of the experience of these individuals by adopting and adapting methods from the social science tradition, and with the aim of obtaining new insight into the culture / turnover relationship within the specific setting of the licensed retail sector.

5.4 Research methods

The development of the methodological position discussed above led to a consideration of qualitative research methods. In attempting to understand better the relationship between a specific organisational culture, worker behaviour and employment intentions, it was considered that empiricism and the context of the hospitality workplace and hospitality worker needed exploring for a depth of understanding rather than the distant analysis of surveys. In recent articles connected to management research there has been an increasing recommendation for qualitative methods to be used to a greater extent, including case study (Redman and Matthews, 1998).

The researcher's support for a case study approach was informed by the work of Stake (1995, 2000) who characterises qualitative studies as being holistic, empirical and interpretive. He stresses the need to understand the object, "more than to understand how it differs from others" (p. 47), and for qualitative study to be field-oriented, case-oriented and naturalistic. Stake (1995) is persuasive in his subsequent recommendation of the uniqueness of the case study method (see also Yin, 1981, 2003a, 2003b; Ghauri and Gronhaug, 2002; Robson, 2002; Remenyi et al, 2005), recognising the issues and debates around generalisability with a concept of 'particularisation': "we take a particular case and come to know it well, not primarily as to how it is different from others but what it is, what it does" (1995: 8). The emphasis is on vigorous interpretation, "placing the interpreter in the field to observe the workings of the case". This high degree of involvement by the researcher is also endorsed by Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe (2002: 56-57). Case study method was adopted for the current research study as it allowed such close involvement with the organisation and the employee in order to examine in fine detail the worker experience and the cultural interplay between organisation, work groups and individuals.

5.4.1 Case study research design

The decision to adopt a case study approach to explore workplace culture, the experience of individuals and their labour turnover intentions, is supported by a range of commentators on research methods. In particular, case study is recommended where there is a need to explore social interaction within sub-culture groups. Bell (1987) recommends case study as suitable for the individual researcher

as a way of studying a problem in depth, and for identifying interaction processes at work. Nisbet and Watt (1980: 5) declare that, “sometimes it is only by taking a practical instance that we can obtain a full picture of the interaction.” Gill and Johnson (1991: 150) confirm the case study as an effective methodology for producing in-depth outputs, “in a relatively under-researched area.” Gummesson (2008: 38) notes the effectiveness of case study for studying phenomena that are ambiguous, dynamic and formed of complex relationships. Cresswell (1998) refers to the case study as a ‘bounded system’, linking it to descriptive and interpretive ethnographic studies of social and cultural groups, formulating what he terms a cultural portrait (1998: 61).

The bounded system, the case being studied within a particular place and at a particular time, is enriched and validated by different sources of data and rich contextual information. Cresswell also refers to a ‘multi-site’ study as providing multiple sources of information, an approach which, within a need for triangulation and validation, could increase the possibility of generalisation (see also Silverman, 2006). A multi-site study also appeared appropriate within the context of the hospitality sector and literature (after Hoque, 2000; Ogbonna and Harris, 2002; Maxwell, Watson and Quail, 2004). These writers point to the multi-unit, branded hospitality chain as a rewarding field for a study of organisational culture and people management, and for instrumental case study methods. The challenge of cultural replication across a strongly branded, multi-divisional company was also raised in the literature (see Ogbonna, 1992), and would be illuminated by a multi-site study. In support of this approach is the definition of a case study by Robson (2002: 178):

“A strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence.”

Redman and Matthews (1998: 65), in a review of the research agenda within service quality and HRM put forward a strong argument for, “research strategies that incorporate well designed and intense case study research,” rather than reliance on desk analysis of macro-surveys. In this way a greater understanding of the management of people may be gained, illuminating more theoretical, descriptive approaches rather than normative, more prescriptive approaches. Within the hospitality research domain, case study method is also endorsed by Kelliher and Perrett (2001), Kelliher and Riley (2003). The latter study of HRM practices in the restaurant sector noted the need to obtain data from different business units, semi-structured interviews with employees of different positions and status within the organisation, and from documentary analysis. As a result of this consideration of research design, the current study followed a case study approach within a multi-site, branded hospitality chain.

5.4.2 The licensed retail sector as case study setting

In line with Stake’s principle that, “Case study is not a methodological choice but a choice of object to be studied. We choose to study the case” (1998:86), the author assessed alternative objects to be studied, as in different hospitality sectors, assessed against a set of criteria with links to the literature. A licensed retail sector chain particularly fulfilled criteria in terms of its long-standing labour turnover and retention challenges; its contemporary structure of multi-site operations within

corporate brands; its reliance on small work groups of core and peripheral employees in direct interface with customers; the competitive drive for service quality and a service culture; the simultaneous need for excellent customer service and operational efficiencies and the resultant tensions and stress of the work.

Such a company would allow inquiry into culture and employment at three different levels or dimensions. Firstly, there would be the influence of the corporate organisation or parent company, in terms of aspects such as corporate strategy, branding, company-wide policies, communications, espoused values and corporate cultural messages. Secondly, there would be the influence of the brand and the specific pub unit, its essential characteristics in terms of service and product standards, brand values and specifications, systems, customer mix and labour market. Thirdly, there could be investigation of the employees themselves and their experiences as individuals and in their small work groups, including demographic profile, employment motivations, work group interactions, their commitment, values and attitudes, and their turnover intentions.

The researcher attended a meeting at the university with representatives of a pub chain regarding student placements and the conversation led to discussions with their HR executives about the company's concern about its labour turnover problems. There was immediate enthusiasm on the company's side for an independent study of the turnover issues in different brands. The company met the above criteria very closely, and the potential for an in-company research project presented an attractive

and opportunistic solution to the dilemma of gaining case study access (Easterby-Smith et al, 2002: 71). This organisation would provide a multiplicity of sources of information in terms of different, if replicated outlets in different geographical locations, and therefore the potential for different local labour market variables. The industry is highly competitive, with the larger chains seeking high productivity and high performance from its employees, but in experiencing the highest average labour turnover levels in the economy, the desire for high commitment from the workforce is compromised. The occupational variety and shift system within the pubs sector would facilitate the study of small groups and sub-cultures in terms of a cultural exploration of their values and underlying assumptions, a cultural portrait of working in the licensed retail sector. The organisation operated a number of strongly branded sub-chains, trading under their own brand name. The strong corporate branding of multi-site units would provide research potential concerning the replication of corporate culture, service culture and the underpinning values.

5.4.3 The case study organisation

Silverman (2006: 308) discusses how theory can lead to the choice of a critical case, and a multi-site national chain of pubs and bars emerged as the collaborative organisation within which the case was to be studied. The nature and structure of this company provided an appropriate setting for the research and inquiry in terms of labour process issues, and because of a mutual interest in culture and HR challenges, notably labour turnover. The developing rapport and relationship between company, its executives and the researcher enabled cooperation, access and opportunity to the researcher. As a UK-based group of over 2,000 outlets (40,000 staff), this company

fulfilled the criteria for an appropriate research project and for ultimately a degree of generalisability of the results. The organisation, known here as 'Pubs & Bars plc', is a national chain with a long history within the UK's hospitality industry, and is structured around leading brand names, 12 different brands which are well known high street pub-restaurants, well known by their brand name and not the 'Pubs & Bars plc' company name itself.

Their multi-site, multi-unit operations cover the country, in particular towns and cities, where even in the same high street, there may be 2 or 3 outlets under the same 'Pubs & Bars plc' ownership but within different brands to meet different customer segments of the food and drink leisure market. Each brand is predicated on specific attributes and themes, dependant on its target market, with precisely defined elements of branding such as the food and beverage offer, ambience, design, fixtures and fittings, music, visual entertainment, sport interests, pub games and bar-game machines. The products on sale emphasise both food and drink, with pricing and quality linked to the specific food and drink offer considered appropriate for the brand and its market. The operations are thus highly standardised, whatever the location, with brand concepts (also termed brand propositions) clearly specified and documented. In early discussions it was apparent that the organisation was concerned that within a hugely competitive sector, it should consistently review its business performance indicators, and that employee productivity and labour turnover were two of the most significant indicators.

The organisation had already undertaken its own internal study and report of employment trends and productivity (Goddard, 2005), and had statistical evidence that increased length of service of an employee led to increased productivity. In compiling the report, Goddard, a senior executive, analysed a raft of data from the company-wide and fully integrated IT reporting systems, including employee length of service, the average number of transactions per employee per hour, and employee turnover. Goddard was able to conclude that productivity increased significantly where staff had been employed for more than one year, though there were wide variances between brands, and that in those outlets where staff turnover was below 100% per annum, productivity was up to 20% better. The report states that, “All the evidence shows that we should continue to focus our HR activities on improving staff turnover and retention” (Goddard, 2005: 8).

Following the initial meeting with HR executives of ‘Pubs & Bars plc’, the researcher engaged in a series of exploratory discussions concerning the issues of labour turnover with corporate directors in HR and marketing / branding, with area or regional managers, and with unit managers. From these discussions emerged a range of comparative performance data about the different brands. The sophisticated information technology and electronic point of sale systems across the entire organisation enables regional and senior operations management to gather current data of great detail. One example is that a regional operations director in a remote head office is able to review the productivity within a specific outlet at the level of ‘number of transactions per employee per hour’.

At the company's head office in Birmingham, the HR Director of 'Pubs & Bars plc' handed to the researcher a full set of brand performance data as well as the quantitatively-based Goddard report referred to above. In analysing the trends and patterns within this data, the researcher noted two high street brands that possessed a similar number of units spread across England, and that were individually of similar size in terms of square footage. Furthermore, the brand units were located, with few exceptions, in the same town and cities. It became clear from the documentation in fact that many of the pubs within the two brands were situated so close to each other that they shared the same street address. However, it was noted by the researcher that the comparative performance profiles and statistical details, especially labour turnover rates, could not be more different. The researcher proposed to the HR Director that these two brands appeared to be highly appropriate bases for the case study research project, a proposal which met with agreement.

5.4.4 The brands in the case study

'Stephensons' is a brand of 80 units across England and had been in operation for 10 years. 'Stephensons' has elements of an Irish national culture theme, with a market segmentation consisting of a wide range of consumer demographic profiles from young to middle aged and elderly, from shoppers to late-night drinkers and in some cases, clubbers visiting the night club above the main bar. On specified nights, the clubs have a closing time of two o'clock in the morning, the pub/restaurant itself having been open all day. The food offer, available all day, is relatively extensive and priced at the upper end of pub eating, reflecting the brand's stated themes of 'Irish-influenced town centre pub', and 'quality pub/restaurant concept'. High

standards of customer service, including table service of food and beverages, were considered crucially important to the overall brand proposition.

‘Breeze’ is a brand of some 90 units across England, and is also about 10 years old as a concept. ‘Breeze’ is based on a more confined target market, younger customers in the main, perhaps 18 to 35 years old, the brand being based on music, sport television, bar games, with night clubs in some outlets, and a food offer based more on snacks and ‘value for money’ packages combining a one course meal and a drink (e.g. chicken curry and a pint) which might appeal to those such as young people and students on a relatively limited ‘eating out’ budget. The brand proposition themes were stated in phrases such as, ‘chill-out’ and ‘perfect party places’.

‘Pubs & Bars plc’ reports revealed that ‘Stephensons’ business performance level was poor; downward trends in trading and profitability against budget and forecast; very high labour turnover of front-line employees (185% per annum); high turnover of managers (25% per annum for pub management); and the lowest productivity rating in the company at 2 transactions per employee per hour. ‘Breeze’ had relatively low labour turnover of staff (88%), particularly low management turnover (3%) and a high productivity measure of 8 transactions per employee per hour. The researcher was given company statistical documentation for both brands and the labour turnover rates in every ‘Breeze’ pub were lower than in ‘Stephensons’ across the country. This was particularly striking as in most of the locations, from the north

to the south of England, both brands were present. Yet in every town or city, the ‘Breeze’ labour turnover rate was substantially lower than that in ‘Stephensons’.

These performance statistics could not be explained by ‘Pubs & Bars plc’ executives during the exploratory discussions with the researcher. They confirmed that the brands, although varying in consumer target market, mostly operated in the same locations, employed similar types of staff on the same terms and conditions, same systematic and company-wide training and induction programmes, yet ‘Breeze’ was much more successful and profitable than ‘Stephensons’. The labour turnover challenge within the licensed retail sector became a major topic in the researcher’s early meetings with ‘Pubs & Bars plc’ personnel, with much anecdotal evidence of the problems such turnover presented to the maintenance of consistent standards within such large, multi-site brands. From the company’s perspective, confirmed to the researcher at a head office meeting with the HR Director of the organisation, it was essential to gain a better insight into how and why the difference in performance between the two brands was occurring.

5.4.5 Case study company culture

Discussions with the ‘Pubs & Bars plc’ HR Director revealed that company strategy held that each of its brands needed to be highly distinctive and differentiated in its offering. The targeted customer segment would need to identify closely with the pub brand concept and standards, and the HR Director commented that, “we want the customer to feel a definite culture about the place.” This executive offered a

comment that the relative success of one brand over another could well be connected to management approaches, style and culture. The company had recently completed a series of management seminars attended by every unit manager (around 2,000) under the title of ‘Purpose and Values’, where company philosophy and vision were the main agenda items. From these discussions came broad statements of the values of the organisation, reproduced below as Figure No. 10.

Figure No. 10: ‘Pubs & Bars plc’: Purpose and Values

OUR VALUES: Behaving with integrity

- Behave with honesty and respect others
- Treat as you would want to be treated
- Be welcoming and inclusive
- Proud and professional
- Explain the ‘why’

OUR VALUES: Our People are the brand

- Fulfil the potential of our people
- Manage correct work-life balance
- Supportive and honest 2-way feedback
- Respect individuals and their goals
- Celebrate success

OUR VALUES: Getting better all the time

- Always aim high
- Create and share goals and benchmarks
- Freedom to challenge and suggest
- Consult, develop and innovate-within clear remits
- Constantly review and evolve the offer
- Share best practice and challenge bad

Source: ‘Pubs & Bars plc’ Management Seminar Presentation

The contemporary context of these ‘purpose and values’ seminars within the organisation as a whole, the internal report, and the particular issues surrounding a ‘failing’ brand (‘Stephensons’) and a ‘successful’ brand (‘Breeze’) aligned with the thesis as a whole. The discussions and the documentation provided by the ‘Pubs & Bars plc’ organisation, as well as their enthusiasm for the topic area, presented the researcher with a viable case study opportunity, with labour turnover at the heart of a problem within the hospitality industry. The case also encouraged a predisposition to investigate the significance of organisational culture as an element in understanding the striking differences in business performance and effectiveness of two brands in the service sector.

5.5 Data collection methods

Following a decision to pursue a qualitative methodology, incorporating a case study research design, the method of data collection was considered. In line with the objectives of the research project, it was evident that access to employees would need to be established and some form of qualitative, in-depth interview undertaken to gather data prior. Any other ethnographic method such as participant observation was felt inappropriate in terms of the author’s profile and the sector, though clearly there would be valuable observation opportunity in the business units before and during the interviews. In-depth interviews form a main plank of many qualitative studies (Silverman, 2006), with semi-structured formats recommended in accessing individuals’ attitudes and values (p.114), once the rapport between interviewer and interviewee has been established.

Byrne also speaks of qualitative interviewing being appropriate to ascertaining people's attitudes and values, "to explore voices and experiences" (2004:182). Within case studies about human behaviour, Silverman (2006: 123) considers that interviews within a non-positivistic paradigm are 'emotionalist', concerned, "not with obtaining objective facts but with eliciting authentic accounts of subjective experience." Silverman stresses the need for appropriate environmental circumstances, for rapport between interviewer and interviewee, conducive to open dialogue. Emotionalism tends to suggest an unstructured interview approach but if a multi-site study is to be adopted and particular comparative aspects from the literature are to be explored and analysed, a semi-structured approach was considered likely to be more effective.

Grounded in the synthesis of the main literature themes, it was considered that a set of prompt questions and subject areas would be pre-prepared and allow some comparative analysis across different business units and employees, but there would be flexibility to allow for the different and unique experiences of each interviewee, allowing the interviewee to express feelings and attitudes as naturally as possible. The style of interviewing would be informal and encourage a safe rapport between interviewer and interviewee. It was therefore considered that a semi-structured interview protocol would be formulated linked closely to the literature themes but allowing the informal flexibility necessary to gain in-depth understanding of the individual, the group, and the organisational issues, as Burgess (1982, cited in Easterby-Smith et al, 1991:73) puts it: "to understand how individuals construct the meaning and significance of their situations from the complex personal framework of

beliefs and values, which they have developed over their lives in order to help explain and predict events in their world.”

This aspect of the life experiences, past experiences and cultural development brought to the workplace and the work group by employees accords with the anthropological traditions of understanding about the recruitment or initiation of new group members (see also Helms and Stern, 2001; Hall, 2004). As a result the author reviewed research methods close to the oral history and biographical studies in qualitative methodologies, in particular the life and work history methodology often utilised within organisational and employment studies (Bryman and Bell, 2003). Life and work history analysis derives from a strong sociological research methodology stretching back to the 1920's as sociologists became more and more fascinated by the everyday life of working and middle class citizens (Bennett and Watson, 2002). In the United Kingdom, the public house became a particularly rich, sociological seam of research data, as in the mass observation project of Harrison and Madge in the 1930's, later published as, “The Pub and the People” in 1943 and again in 1987 (Mass Observation, 1987). The life and work history method was adopted for the current study as a means of discovering unknown elements of the employment experience in the pub brands, and was compatible with a more anthropological approach.

5.5.1 Life and work history analysis

Bennett and Watson (2002: 190) refer to the pub as having a cultural and symbolic role, “an icon of everyday life”, and interestingly link the study of everyday work in pubs to the emotional labour literature: “Pub work is ‘service work’, which involves a whole range of emotional ‘performances’, a feature of many routine face-to-face jobs” (2002: 210). In the United States, Whyte (1948) undertook considerable sociological research within the hospitality sector regarding employee attitudes to the industry, and Studs Terkel adopted an ‘everyday life’ approach to underpin a large body of work. He interviewed many individuals in different jobs across the nation and in all sectors, culminating in his book, “Working” (Terkel, 1975), adding the sub-title, “People Talk About What They Do All Day and How They Feel About What They Do All Day.” More recently, this form of oral history and life and work history analysis have gained more widespread academic recognition in connection with organisations and employment (Summerfield, 1998; Bryman and Bell, 2003; Taylor et al, 2009). Cresswell (1998: 49) describes the life history approach as the researcher reporting on “an individual’s life and how it reflects cultural themes of the society, personal themes, institutional themes, and social histories.” Stake (1995:101-102) recommends life history approaches in enabling the understanding of a clearer reality, clarifying by description with the individuals most knowledgeable about their situation.

This approach has also been addressed by Denzin (1989) in terms of an interpretive biography, noting life course stages and experiences, and comments that such methods have begun to be applied to the workplace in terms of the stages of an

individual's work history. Dex (1991) pioneered the work history methodology in terms of the close relationship with occupational matters, including the mobility and immobility of labour, and Ladkin (2004: 244) particularly links life and work history analysis to, "the economists' interest in labour turnover and mobility." Ladkin (1999; 2004) brings the methodology to research within the tourism and hospitality sectors, positive in the belief that such approaches can lead to better understanding of work, labour market and labour process issues. In developing the research strategy for this thesis, the researcher considered that an element of innovation could be introduced into the semi-structured interview method by linking the literature themes, the anthropological tradition and the exploratory / qualitative approach to life and work history analysis. This would assist the deeper understanding of how and why a particular individual came to be employed in a particular job and organisation within a particular organisational culture, and whether or not this process and experience had ultimate bearing on their intentions to stay in that job or to leave that job.

The value of life and work history analysis as a research method within the service sector and specifically the hospitality sector has been established by the work of Ladkin (1999; 2004). Ladkin comments that although this method has been common amongst mainstream social science research, there has been little application to the tourism and hospitality industries. She sees life history and work history methods as being discrete in many ways but clearly linked in terms of individuals and their career development. Life histories afford "an opportunity for the researcher to get close to the experiences and feelings of the respondent" (1999: 38), and that, "the development and change of an organization or group can be effectively shown

through well-chosen life histories.” The highly qualitative nature of life history analysis with its emphasis on in-depth interviewing on a one-to-one basis is contrasted with the quantitative origins of work history analysis, with large-scale studies of employment patterns, for example in studies linked to gender. However, Ladkin refers to the work of Baker and Elias (1991) in arguing that smaller scale and qualitative analysis of work situations demonstrate the indivisibility of life and work experiences, tracing the life and career developments and choices. In assessing the value of life and work history analysis to the hospitality domain, Ladkin particularly refers to its usage in understanding recruitment and retention policies (1999: 44) and the greater understanding of labour markets, (see also Ladkin and Riley, 1996; Ladkin, 2002).

In terms of the specific links to the current study, Ladkin (2004: 240-245) later discussed the appeal of this research methodology for a better understanding of social relationships and human behaviour, for adding to the value of in-depth interviews, and for gaining insight into labour markets, mobility and labour turnover, in particular on job change as a unit of analysis:

“Support for this unit of analysis is derived from the notion that in an attempt to understand the structure and dynamic processes of the labour market, the actual jobs that people do are not as significant as the way in which individuals move between jobs” (Ladkin, 2004: 245).

The basic features of life and work history analysis in terms of gaining a more in-depth picture of how, why and where the stages of life and work combine to form major influences on an individual’s attitudes, behaviour and experience, allowed the

connection to be made with the cultural anthropological approaches of recruitment and initiation, relationships in the group and workplace and ideology. In terms of research methods, the case study design linked to semi-structured interviews were thus impacted upon by the life and work history analysis approach, encouraging questions which trace the stages of life and work as part of the interview schedule. Ladkin herself comments that as opposed to survey and questionnaire method, “it is likely that using face-to-face interviews would allow for more in-depth information to be gathered’ (2004: 252). Thus the prompt questions designed for the interviews of employees in the “Pubs & Bars plc” case study organisation included elements of longitudinal data, from school and education, to training and qualifications, first work experience and subsequent job and career moves.

5.6 Data collection

Within the qualitative and case study methodological framework previously determined, the data collection strategy consisted of a first phase of fact finding and introductory discussions with the ‘Pubs & Bars plc’ senior management at corporate and at brand level. The researcher had initial, exploratory meetings with the company’s Board level HR Director, and once the two brands for the case study had been identified and agreed, with the HR Director of ‘Stephensons’ and ‘Breeze’, with Regional Operations Directors and with Regional HR and Training Managers as well as two unit managers.

The researcher based the topics for these familiarisation discussions on the concepts of business strategy, human resource strategy and organisational culture, concepts outlined as intertwined within the literature. Important information was acquired regarding the development of the company, its overall strategy, the brand strategy and its core competencies; the HRM framework in terms of policy and of recruitment, selection and training procedures; cultural factors such as the espoused values and beliefs communicated by corporate and regional management; labour turnover and labour retention issues; the links to performance and productivity. These meetings also helped to shape the research design in terms of documentary analysis of company literature pertaining to corporate strategies and employee management policies and practices, from recruitment and selection to induction material, and training and development programmes. Company documents in large organisations provide a wealth of evidence, though matters of currency, purpose and attribution need to be verified (Thorpe and Holt, 2008: 108-109). The researcher was stringent in checking these matters concerning company documents prior to interpretation. Martin and Siehl (1983) recommend a combination of qualitative interviewing alongside documentary and artifact analysis for cultural insights and understanding employee values and behaviour.

From these exploratory meetings, it was established and agreed that following initial pilot interviews, the researcher would undertake a series of in-depth interviews of managers and staff in outlets of both brands. In selecting the specific pubs and locations for these interviews, the researcher referred back to the company data on labour turnover. As previously indicated, it was clear that wherever in the country

the two brands jointly operated, the 'Breeze' labour turnover rates were much lower than 'Stephensons'. The researcher determined that the interviews should take place in different locations across England where both brands were represented, to ensure that local labour market variables were minimised and that there would be a degree of triangulation in the data in terms of documentary analysis, qualitative interviews and multiple location, aiding the validity of an instrumental as well as collective case study. As a result, the researcher selected the 4 large town / city locations, geographically spread across the country (Manchester, Leicester, Reading and London-Euston) and with patterns of performance and labour turnover rates in line with the statistics for both brands. The research was strongly assisted by the full cooperation and enthusiastic collaboration of the parent organisation and the managers more directly concerned with the two brands.

5.6.1 Employee interviews

In total, 52 in-depth interviews were conducted between December 2006 and June 2007, 25 in 'Stephensons' and 27 in 'Breeze', in pubs situated close by each other, namely in London-Euston area (2 units, one from each brand), Reading (3 units), Leicester (3 units) and Manchester (4 units). In 'Stephensons' (see Table No.1 below), the interviews were conducted with 4 managers, 4 team leaders (shift supervisors), 4 kitchen staff, 13 bar-staff members. In 'Breeze' (Table No.2), the 27 interviews were conducted with 5 managers, 5 team leaders, 3 kitchen staff and 14 bar staff members. The semi-structured interview schedule of questions to prompt responses and for later comparative analysis was developed in line with the literature review and the aims and research questions of the research study, and with the

influence of the life and work history analysis methodological technique. With excellent cooperation from the ‘Pubs & Bars plc’ company, pilot interviews took place in two other London pubs, one from each brand, and modifications applied to the interview structure as a result.

Table No.1: Case Study Interviews in ‘Stephensons’ (n=25)

LOCATIONS	NO. UNITS	EMPLOYEES INTERVIEWED (Nos.)			
		MANAGERS	TEAM LEADERS	BAR STAFF	KITCHEN STAFF
LONDON	1	1	1	3	1
READING	2	1	1	4	1
LEICESTER	1	1	1	2	0
MANCHESTER	2	1	1	4	2

Table No.2: Case Study Interviews in ‘Breeze’ (n=27)

LOCATIONS	NO. UNITS	EMPLOYEES INTERVIEWED (Nos.)			
		MANAGERS	TEAM LEADERS	BAR STAFF	KITCHEN STAFF
LONDON	1	1	1	2	0
READING	1	1	1	4	1
LEICESTER	2	2	2	5	1
MANCHESTER	2	1	1	3	1

One particular result of the pilot interviews revolved around the interviewing technique and setting. Licensed retail premises such as those within the case study

organisation do not possess secluded offices where taped interviews could be carried out in relative tranquility. It became clear that the interviews would in fact be conducted during quieter business periods in corners of the pubs themselves, and tape recording proved impossible due to noise and disruption, either from within the establishment or from outside in busy town centre streets. Consequently, field notes became the main form of recording the responses, but this in fact proved to be beneficial as an interpretive commentary and reflected Stake's view that, "getting the exact words of the respondent is usually not very important, it is what they mean that is important" (1995: 66). Glaser (1998: 107) has also proffered the view that taping interviews may only be considered as essential when the researcher is requiring absolute evidence in verifying and substantiating an a priori position or finding.

Taping also adds to the formality of the situation and can damage the rapport between the parties (Whyte, 1984: 114). In fact, interviewing pub employees within their own pub environment, often doubling up as a refreshment break as well, proved popular and helped to reduce the formality and possible suspicions surrounding an interview. The location of a corner in the pub itself appeared to have the effect of getting the front-line staff in particular to relax and to open up in a social 'chat' manner. Interviewees also seemed much more at ease when the tape recorder was not used, reducing any tension and threat of their actual words being recorded, encouraging employees to discuss their approaches to their work, their lives and the organisation. It was also evident that beginning the interview by talking about themselves, their life and work history, their home and family, their background and

career to date, proved to be a good starting point for encouraging a good flow of dialogue.

5.6.2 Carrying out the interviews

The routine adopted by the researcher was one of familiarisation with the brand and the specific pub location, arriving early in order to observe the business environment, the nature of the business activity and the forms of interaction taking place between staff, and between staff and customers. The manager would normally be interviewed first, and often at most length because the managers inevitably had more of a life and work history to discuss, and had often been with the organisation a longer time, enabling a lengthier discussion over some of the questions and areas for investigation. The managers were also very much the ‘gatekeepers’ of the unit, and obtaining their trust and support was essential in providing a platform for the later staff interviews, giving the openings needed for the data collection, an approach much discussed by Whyte (1984: 60-62) in his earlier study of US restaurants (Whyte, 1948).

The managers also seemed reassured that the study was confidential and also being undertaken across a range of units within different brands. Notes were made during each interview, whilst a sensibly-paced, free-flowing dialogue was encouraged, with the interviewer frequently checking clarity, meanings, and noting the descriptions of incidents, linkages and explanations. All interviewees were correctly assured that confidentiality was absolute and that the researcher was independent from the

company and only reporting back anonymously, as the company was keen to know more about its employees, how they reached the job they were in, and what their feelings were about the job and the company. Trust had to be obtained due to the personal nature of some aspects of the interviews (Easterby-Smith et al, 2002:90). Such assurances appeared to be accepted and the informality of the interview was maintained by interpersonal skills and good eye contact. At the end of each interview, the interviewer summarised the points made by the respondent and checked for accuracy with the respondent. Following each interview, the researcher arranged for there to be a time-span between interviews as an opportunity of making fuller field notes, writing expanded versions of specific quotations and phrases for rich data examples (see Thorpe and Holt, 2008: 97-99).

The question of how much structure should be contained within research interviews is a constant concern (Jones, 1985: 37). The interviews followed as unrestricted a semi-structured format as possible to enable fulsome yet focused discussion, with the rapport and flexibility of a more open-ended style of interview (Silverman, 2006: 110). The final version of the researcher's note-taking format, replicated later in this chapter, became more of a set of structured headings and prompts to ensure sufficient comparative data for analysis, but the interviews did not always follow a rigid set format, question by question, but developed in many cases into affable discussions, with the interviewees generally feeling confident in their ability to expand and develop their answers. This proved invaluable in gaining access to the more subtle aspects of their responses regarding behaviour, attitudes, values and other cultural elements.

5.6.3 Interview schedule development

In preparing for the interviews, the schedule of questions was developed in order to reflect key themes from the literature review and the resultant research questions, as well as the methodological approaches and specific research design elements. This process was designed to ensure synchronicity between the literature, research methods and subsequent data analysis in order that reliable conclusions could be drawn. The overall pattern and design of the interviews was based on three methodological influences. Firstly, the schedule needed to reflect the anthropological approach as proposed by the work of Douglas (1982) and Mars and Nicod (1984) and applied earlier to the research questions, following the progression of an individual from recruitment and initiation into a workplace group. Secondly, the interviews needed to elicit and capture sufficient biographical detail of the employees for the life and work history approach to be effectively integrated (Ladkin, 1999). Thirdly, reflecting the emic approach, the interviews needed to explore the employee's experience of working in the specific environment of a pub within a branded chain of the licensed retail sector, discovering their perceptions of the culture and factors affecting their turnover intentions.

Within this overall pattern and strategy for the interviews and the documentary analysis, the researcher initially identified seven key themes from the literature review (as outlined in Chapter 4, section 4.5), which needed to be addressed by the empirical research and therefore mapped on to the interview questions for later data analysis:

- Firstly, there needed to be data concerning the recruitment and socialisation of the employees into the organisation and into the behaviours and values of the existing sub-cultures, linking to such key literature as Morgan (1986), Martin (1992), Bate (1992), Redman and Wilkinson (2001).
- Secondly, insight into the firm's espoused and dominant type of corporate culture needed to be obtained to assess the symbols, values and norms being communicated to employees by this strongly branded, multi-site service organisation, linking to the work of Peters and Waterman (1982), Smircich (1983), Meek (1988, 1992), Mabey and Salaman (1995), Ogbonna (1992), Ogbonna and Harris (2002).
- Thirdly, and closely connected with the second theme, it would be necessary to explore the impact of central HRM policies and procedures to assess the extent of their influence on culture, commitment and performance, as discussed in works by such as Guest (1987, 1992), Ogbonna and Wilkinson (1990), Storey (1995, 2007), Boxall and Purcell (2003), Legge (2005).
- A fourth data collection requirement would need to address the question of *grid*, of the extent to which social controls, constraints and power relationships affect the employment experience. At a generic level, this reflects the work of Douglas (1978, 1982), Mars and Nicod (1984), and Ogbor (2001). It is also informed by the work more specific to the service industries that embraces the customer within the service work environment, exemplified by the writings of Lashley (1997), Redman and Matthews (1998), Ritzer (1999), Hoque (2000), Korczynski (2002), Legge (2005) and Noon and Blyton (2007). The case study organisation's particular characteristics of being replicated at many locations and strongly branded are

also important considerations within this *grid* dimension of culture (Ogbonna, 1992; Houghton and Tremblay, 1994; De Chernatony and Cottam, 2008).

- A fifth theme addresses the critical importance of *group* as defined by the Douglas typology (1978, 1982), concerned with the cohesion and sense of belonging that develop within the workplace teams. The nature of the work relationships needs to be discovered within the case study outlets, particularly the degree of affective orientation (after Child, 1981 and Bate, 1992), and the subsequent links to employee commitment, a cohesive culture and workforce stability (Purcell, 1999; Guest, 2003; Legge, 2005).
- This leads to the sixth theme addressed by the primary research, the question of labour turnover and particularly the employees' labour turnover intentions in terms of the psychological and commitment paradigm (as in Mobley et al, 1979; Sheridan and Abelson, 1983; Allen and Meyer, 1990; Meyer and Allen, 1991; Morrell et al, 2001; Kuvaas, 2007) and whether the developing thinking around turnover culture is relevant (Abelson, 1993; Deery and Shaw, 1997, 1999; Deery, 2002).
- Finally, and closely related to the labour turnover phenomenon, a study of hospitality workers in direct service contact with the customer requires exploration of the extent of emotional labour being deployed, and its impact on behaviour, commitment and labour turnover intention. This area links to the work of Hochschild (1983), but also to output from within the specific research domain of service work, by such as Mann (1997), Redman and Matthews (1998), Riley et al (1998), Ogbonna and Whipp (1999), Lashley and Best (2002), Seymour and Sandiford (2005). There is connection to the ideas proposed by Korczynski (2002, 2005, 2007) in explanation of service

work stress and tension, particularly the notions of the simultaneous application of ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ HRM approaches and the customer-oriented bureaucracy.

The final interview schedule, after the pilot interviews and subsequent amendments, was as follows in Figure No. 11 below. The early flow of the interview headings reflected the application of life and work history methods, which was so beneficial in encouraging willing responses from the employees, comfortable and content to reflect on their own past. This rapport enabled the interviewer to move on to more probing questions concerning the industry, turnover intentions and the more subtle aspects of responses concerning teamwork, and more sensitive *grid* and *group* cultural issues regarding constraints and pressures within the organisation.

5.7 Data analysis: method

The transcriptions of the edited interview field notes provided a large bank of rich data and the method of informal, unthreatening interviewing style helped to maximise the dialogue and the amount of material collected for analysis. Exemplars of two edited interview transcripts, one from each brand, are provided in Appendix No. 1 (a 'Breeze' employee) and Appendix No. 2 (a 'Stephensons' employee). The researcher sought a method of analysis of the interview data that would search for commonalities across the responses to the specific areas of questioning and discussion. In getting 'close' to the data through the transcription process (undertaken by the author), it was clear that there were reflections and responses that shared root constructs and many responses which reflected cultural traits that had significant impact on the employee's intention to stay in the job or to leave the job. As a means of identifying the themes and patterns within the many responses, the author required as objective an approach as possible and found an effective and relevant software system of qualitative data analysis known as Nvivo.

The 52 interview transcripts were uploaded on to the Nvivo software on a laptop. These are termed as case nodes, and enable the attributes function of Nvivo to be applied, gathering together data from each interview including the respondents' age, gender and other biodata. The researcher then highlighted interview responses and sorted extracts from the transcripts into separate desktop folders dedicated to a specific topic (a 'free node' in Nvivo terminology). This proved to be a beneficial process in enabling the researcher to be close to the data, to review all the comments

from a number of months previously and to begin to gain a mind map of patterns and themes emanating from the interviewee responses.

Some comments required a degree of subjectivity in terms of placing the quotation into a particular folder, and in some cases the researcher assigned a quote to more than one folder. This process, known as substantive coding, created a line by line analysis of the interview material, and resulted in more than 80 categories or ‘free nodes’, themes which emerged from the data and the sorting of responses into collective categories. Some of these free nodes were discounted as significant to the research study as perhaps the comment or issue was raised by only one respondent and was of a particularly personal or individual nature, with no clear logical connection to other nodes. Others were catalogued by the software into a hierarchical structure of ‘tree nodes’, demonstrating the development of inter-connected themes and dimensions.

This process firstly resulted in 47 different themes or tree nodes (see Appendix No. 3) from the interviews across both brands but which were also coded as either ‘Stephensons’ or ‘Breeze’ for later differential analysis. Within these tree nodes or themes, it was also possible to assess the number of comments from ‘Stephensons’ employees and the number from ‘Breeze’ employees. This ratio could be considered as significant in terms of the relative importance given to a specific topic by employees of the two brands, and therefore assist the differential analysis. The 47 themes were re-sorted into 11 key clusters or categories which had hierarchical

linkages, linkages also determined by reference to the literature and the overall research questions of the thesis. Figure No. 12 displays the final groupings of themes following themes following the Nvivo analysis and re-sorting by the researcher.

Figure No. 12: Interview Data Analysis: Themes

Organisational Comments / Organisational Culture / Values and Beliefs

Teamwork / Support at Work / Commitment Issues

Stress / Pressure / Customer Problems / Complexity of Customer Mix

Comments about the Brands / Quotations about the Brands

Comments comparing the two Brands

Company Policy / Company Introduction / Company Perceptions

Labour Turnover / Reasons for Leaving / Reasons for Staying

Productivity / Performance Issues

Future Prospects / Career Progression / Career Choice / First Job In Sector

Biodata / Life & Work History Details / Education / Qualifications / Subject of Study

Training / Hospitality Courses / Vocational Courses / Company Courses

Each of these eleven headings or folders contained the collection of responses from the employees, for example one folder contained all the comments from employees of both brands that compared one brand to the other. These collections of responses were then printed out for more detailed analysis by the researcher. They were then divided into folders for each brand and this process proved highly beneficial in evaluating the comments for differences between the two brands, between different categories of staff (e.g. managers, team leaders, bar staff and kitchen staff), and

helped to develop a very rich stream of data based on the dialogues with staff of both brands.

This process allowed for the empirical data to be compared against the aims, the research questions and the major literature themes of this thesis. Certain meta-themes emerged which had the effect of conflating some of the eleven themes into a smaller number of significant clusters of data. These clusters signified the emphasis of the literature and the other bases for the interview questions and topics, but also revealed that the subject of emotional labour had emerged from the interviewee responses as more significant than might have been anticipated. As a result of this phase of data analysis the researcher was able to re-sort the eleven clusters in Figure No. 12 above into five major cluster areas (see Figure No. 13 below). These findings have informed the framework for reporting the findings of the investigation (in the next chapter), enabling a comparative analysis across both brands of the 'Pubs & Bars plc' company and providing the basis for in-depth examination of the worker experience and labour turnover intentions within the organisational culture of the case study brands.

Figure No. 13: Data Analysis: Themes in Major Clusters

Workforce Profile:	demographics / education / internal labour market life and work history elements/ personal circumstances
The Organisation / Brand:	brand comments / descriptions of brand concept organisational values / cultural aspects and elements relationships / structure / constraints / training performance / productivity
Labour Turnover:	comments about turnover / turnover intentions reasons for leaving / reasons for staying stress / pressure / perception of job concept of sector / future career / turnover culture
Emotional Labour:	an emergent theme regarding stress / pressure customer and market complexity / relationships managing and coping with emotions
Organisational Culture:	consisting of data connected to cultural traits / aspects values, beliefs, cognitions, assumptions, meanings, symbols, language, rituals teamwork / work group / commitment / support synthesised elements from all clusters / topics above

5.8 Ethical Considerations

The researcher approached the field-work elements of this study with considerable awareness of the ethical and moral context of an exploration concerning organisations, employees and cultural considerations. The relationships between organisations as employers and their employees are highly sensitive, with the strong potential for misunderstanding and natural apprehension in both parties. Such relationships may be ultimately determined by power and structure, and sanctions, both formal and informal, might be applied if that relationship is compromised. The ethical aspects of field-work have been much considered by writers on research methods (Diener and Crandall, 1978; Whyte, 1984; Stake, 2000; Saunders et al, 2000; Bryman, 2004), and concerns centre on issues such as the danger to participants both physically and mentally, issues to do with identity and deception, and the desire for accuracy when connected to privacy and confidentiality.

Whyte (1984: 193) reviews the difficulties concerning the relationships between researcher, sponsor (the commissioning organisation) and the research participants themselves within his much earlier study of human relations within the American restaurant industry (Whyte, 1948). These issues had resonance for the current study in terms of the clarification of roles between the researcher, the 'Pubs & Bars plc' case study firm, and its managerial and operational employees within the different pub outlets.

A research study which involves the employees giving feedback and opinions about their work, their employer and their circumstances needs to be treated with careful ethical consideration and tact. Additionally, the study was influenced by cultural anthropological principles which required questioning concerning relationships, values, beliefs and attitudes, and utilised an adapted form of the life and work history methodology to discover more longitudinal facts regarding the life and career of the employees. Further, as the researcher needed to encourage a discussion about labour turnover and the employees' turnover intentions, the study involved highly sensitive material concerning the employment plans of individuals, information of acute significance and embarrassment if more generally known.

These issues created a need to be clear about the methods adopted in the field-work from the outset. The role of the researcher as far as the case study organisation was concerned was quickly established as an independent actor, gaining valuable information in a confidential and anonymous manner, reporting back against clear criteria and with no specific names involved in any written report. A detailed agreement was reached between the researcher and the organisation as to the purpose, methods and outputs of the study, highlighting the need for confidentiality. The researcher had to adopt a strategy that would gain the confidence and trust of the unit-level employees so that the interviews would be meaningful and expansive. On entering a particular pub, it was important to firstly meet the manager, to engage in a lengthy discussion about the purpose of the study and to re-assure the manager about the way in which his or her staff would be engaged in the research. Again, confidentiality was stressed as was anonymity, with a genuine statement regarding

the researcher's aim in terms of finding out more about the employees, their background, how they ended up working in a particular pub or bar, and how they felt about the industry, the sector, the pub and their fellow workers. The researcher found the managers highly receptive and collaborative (only one exception), and in two cases, managers expressed the view that it was good that the research was being carried out by a third party, and not via another employee survey from the human resources department.

These ethical issues required the researcher to be clear about the role and the purpose of the interviews, and to maintain a paradigm of being 'on nobody's side', but an objective and impartial observer and inquirer, placed in a privileged position in terms of access to hospitality employees in their place of work. The rapport between interviewer and respondents was aided by the very informal and perhaps unorthodox location of the interviews, often in a corner of the pub, sharing a coffee with the employee, and, before the smoking ban, often moving at the request of the employee to an area of the pub where smoking was allowed, so that the employee could 'fully' enjoy the break from their shift. The researcher adopted a non-threatening posture, relaxed in appearance and dress code, with only a pad of paper and a pen to be seen on the table once the tape recorder had been dispensed with. In order to eliminate suspicion and doubt in the mind of the employee, the researcher began by explaining concisely but accurately the purpose of the study, the confidentiality of the discussion and the fact that no individual names would appear in any report back to the 'Pubs & Bars plc' company. Only the first name of the employee was requested and this was written down on the top of the pad of paper.

The initial introduction by the researcher outlined the purpose of the study as a whole, and was somewhat truncated to the broader aims of ‘finding out more about the company’s employees’; ‘how the staff member feels about the work, the brand, the company as a whole’; ‘how this research might help the company to better understand why people leave jobs in the pubs and why they stay as well.’ The researcher did not go into the more academic and thesis-oriented purposes of the study in terms of the relationship between organisational culture and labour turnover, but concentrated more on being the independent agent, extracting useful information which might help both the company and its employees in the future. This aspect did give the researcher some ethical qualms, in that it could be seen as a ‘hidden agenda’, but it was considered that it was an agenda that would not impact on the respondents in any direct fashion and was thus excusable. There was certainly no false information or pretext given, and the interviewees certainly responded in a fulsome and positive manner, often divulging much more personal information than the researcher had anticipated, as shall be illustrated in Chapter 6.

5.9 Conclusion and chapter summary

This chapter has presented an account of the researcher’s philosophical and methodological approach to the primary research element of the study. Following consideration of the ontological and epistemological contexts of the research aims and the researcher himself, a qualitative and exploratory research design was formulated. The overall aim was to contribute to the gap in knowledge concerning the organisational culture / labour turnover relationship by understanding more about the meanings placed by employees on their experience in their workplace. The

research design aimed to gain insight into the employees' perceptions and feelings about the work itself, about their work groups and colleagues, the organisation for which they work and their intentions and views about changing jobs, gathering all the time the critical data which could assist an understanding of the organisational culture itself and how it impacts on labour turnover intentions.

The research methods adopted in order to fulfill the ambitions of this qualitative study combined an in-depth case study of an instrumental, multiple location type across two brands of a licensed retail firm. The firm itself was a good fit with the criteria of a multi-site, branded hospitality organisation with considerable challenges in terms of human resource management and levels of labour turnover. The collective nature of the case study allowed for primary research to take place in multiple locations across the country and documentary analysis enabled the researcher to comprehend the overall company's espoused 'input' into the workplace and its culture. The case study research was based on flexible semi-structured interviews of employees in each unit, the questions and prompts being derived from the relevant literature and the aim and research questions of the study. Pub outlets were selected within the same towns and cities to nullify the impact of localized labour market variables. The interview method was also influenced by the life and work history analysis methodology in order to find a degree of compatibility with the principles of social anthropological investigation. The large amount of data gathered from these interviews was coded and sorted by use of the Nvivo software programme and particular themes and patterns of comment were garnered from this process. These will now be discussed in detail within the next chapter.

Chapter 6

Research Findings

6.0 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to present the findings from the primary research within the two brands of the ‘Pubs & Bars plc’ company. Extensive quantities of rich data were captured from the employee interviews, as they discussed themselves, their work colleagues, their work and their workplace. Their responses provided significant amounts of material relating to how they interpret and ascribe meanings to their surroundings, how they feel and perceive their work. Through inductive analysis of this qualitative data and the documentary evidence, this chapter aims to present the results and then to seek explanation and understanding of why the employees feel and perceive as they do. In particular, the analysis will focus on the central themes of this thesis: the employees’ labour turnover intentions, and in what way this is affected by the culture of the workplace (each specific pub unit) and that of the organisation (the brand and overarching company). The analysis is not a positivistic assessment of the causes and effect of labour turnover, but an exploratory study of the phenomenon of labour turnover intentions within the social setting of the case study organisation.

6.1 Structure for reporting the findings

The findings and results of the field-work are firstly summarised in the form of a comparative analysis of the two brands, 'Stephensons' and 'Breeze'. The process of data analysis and interpretation led to the identification and comparison of patterns. Themes across the two brands of the case study suggest degrees of convergence or divergence in the responses from the employees across the individual units. These commonalities and differences in the accounts provided by respondents give direction to our understanding of why such variances were manifested. These variances are then considered in detail by reference to the employee responses and documentary evidence. They are analysed against the main literature themes previously established and which informed the research method of semi-structured interviews encompassing the life and work history approach. Finally, explanations are proposed and conclusions drawn which will form the basis of the contribution to knowledge resulting from this study.

The structure and content of reporting the findings is rooted in the anthropological methodology and tradition proposed by Douglas (1973, 1978), and later by Mars and Nicod (1984), for the analysis of work, workplaces and workplace cultures. This approach provides an examination of workplace culture and employment by reviewing the recruitment and initiation of new members, the subsequent social controls and constraints (*grid*) that develop, the workplace relationships (*group*) that are experienced and the dominant ideology and values that affect behaviour and turnover intention (Mars and Nicod, 1984: 3).

6.2 Commonalities and differences in the findings

As outlined in the previous chapter, this study of the phenomenon of labour turnover and its relationship to organisational culture took place in two licensed retail brands with several significant differences in performance indicators. In the quantitative terms of the 'Pubs & Bars plc' company's performance measurement system, 'Stephensons' brand suffered from poor productivity levels and a declining overall commercial performance. 'Stephensons' recorded the highest labour turnover rates of the company as a whole, with rates of 185% per annum for staff categories and 25% per annum for management. 'Breeze', on the other hand, was simultaneously recording strong productivity levels and financial results, whilst labour turnover levels were reported at 88% for staff and 3% for management. The brands were of a similar age and numerical representation across the country, many individual pub units within each brand being located in the same towns and cities. In all cases where the pubs were located adjacently, 'Breeze' outperformed 'Stephensons' and experienced a lower labour turnover. As one Regional Operations Director put it in an exploratory interview prior to the field-work:

"Lower labour turnover in 'Breeze' is something of a mystery....cannot put my finger on it....we could bottle it!....we could build on it if we knew....they're pretty well all on minimum wage....what else do they get from being employed by 'Breeze'? There's lower management turnover also....young assistant managers stay with the brand for years as managers."

'Breeze' Regional Operations Director

In studying the phenomenon of labour turnover intentions within a particular workplace culture, the research has been informed by the psychological school of labour turnover theory, where affect and commitment are significant factors

(Morrell, Loan-Clarke and Wilkinson, 2001). This school considers the factors which enable better understanding of the intention to leave a job, particularly the precursor of commitment level, whether affective, continuance or normative in nature (Allen and Meyer, 1990). These psychology-based theories concentrate on the employees' workplace experience and their perceptions. This study aims to gain insight into those issues with regard to licensed retail sector employees in the case study brands. The model of Mobley et al (1979) provides a synthesis of factors which help our understanding of the development of an 'intention to quit'. Whilst this model includes consideration of factors such as the local labour market, the characteristics of the individual as employee, and the organisation as employer, it does not extend to the context of service work and service-oriented workplace culture.

This study of just such workplaces in two different brands has revealed significant commonalities and differences that require elaboration and explanation in this chapter in order to gain insights into how they affect the employee's intention to leave their job. These commonalities and differences, as expressed by the employees themselves in the interviews and discovered by an analysis of company documentation, have been classified and analysed against the seven predominant literature themes previously summarised in Chapter 4, section 4.5, page 177:

- Recruitment and socialisation of the employees into the workplace culture
- Corporate culture of the brand / organisation espoused to the employees
- HRM policies and procedures affecting the employees
- Workplace constraints / *grid* controls imposed on the employees
- Workplace relationships / *group* factors experienced by the employees
- Emotional labour experienced by service work employees
- Labour turnover intentions of the employees / turnover culture evidence

Figure No. 14 below provides an initial overview of the commonalities and differences across the two brands in terms of the above literary themes. This figure also provides a useful framework on which to build the analysis in the following sections and ultimately aid our understanding of the relationship between organisational culture and labour turnover intention within service work in general and the licensed retail sector of the hospitality industry in particular. It can be seen that the areas of greatest commonality between the brands were under the themes of recruitment and socialisation, the corporate culture espoused, and HRM policies and procedures. The areas of most difference between the brands, as expressed by the employees, concerned the workplace culture dimensions of workplace constraints (*grid*) and workplace relationships (*group*), and the areas of emotional labour and labour turnover intentions.

Figure No. 14: Commonalities and Differences Across the Brands

LITERATURE THEME	COMMONALITIES	DIFFERENCES
RECRUITMENT AND SOCIALISATION	Labour Market - Locations Workforce Profile - Demographics Education - Qualifications Reasons for Employment Skill Level on Entry Prior Work Experience Recruitment and Selection Methods Terms and Conditions Induction Programme	
CORPORATE CULTURE	Corporate Goals - Values Espoused Service Culture Customer Service - Surveillance Mystery Customer Programme Multi-Site Brand Replication Branding Strategy	
HRM POLICIES	HRM Strategy - Service Culture Employee Documentation Induction Programme Corporate HR Handbooks Training and Development Plans Corporate Rules - Regulations Internal Transfer Scheme	
WORKPLACE CONSTRAINTS 'GRID'	Corporate - HRM Policies Brand Systems - Technology Brand Specifications Multi-Site Brand Replication Internal Transfer Scheme	Extent of Brand Specifications Complexity of Service Standards Brand Strategy - Values Brand Product Range Customers - Market Mix Brand Workplace Rules
WORKPLACE RELATIONSHIPS 'GROUP'	Management Team Commitment Continuance Commitment	Normative Commitment Affective Commitment Work Group Cohesion Social Interaction - Subcultures Stable Group Membership Customers - Market Mix Work - Leisure Blurring
EMOTIONAL LABOUR	Service Work Tensions Simultaneous 'Hard-Soft' Model	Customers - Market Mix Customer - Rational and Irrational Customer - Employee Relationship Level of Stress Varied Emotional Display Customer Orientated Bureaucracy
LABOUR TURNOVER INTENTION		Workforce Stability Recorded Turnover Levels Turnover Culture Intentions to Quit Impact of Turnover - Stress

6.3 Recruitment and socialisation

This section reviews the interview data and documentary evidence concerning the backgrounds and educational achievements of the employees in the pubs, their work history and how they came to be recruited and initiated into the licensed retail workplace. Data from both brands forms the basis for this analysis. It is evident that there is a significant degree of commonality between the brands in terms of the characteristics of the workforce employed, their backgrounds and the methods of introducing them to the company and brand. The similarity of the workforce profiles of 'Stephensons' and 'Breeze' is an important factor in the comparative analysis between the two brands. These profiles remain constant across the four geographical locations, and across all twelve outlets where field-work took place. As pubs of both brands were represented in all locations, impacted upon by the same labour market conditions, there appeared to be no discernable differences between the brands with regard to the profile of the workforce employed. This profile of the staff in both brands will now be considered in more detail.

6.3.1 Workforce profile

The interview schedule included several questions regarding the demographic profile of the interviewees. This enabled the development of an understanding of the characteristics of the workforce at recruitment. The demographic profile of the 52 employees interviewed across the two brands mirrors previously published labour force analyses and research (Labour Market Trends, 1998; Hospitality Training

Foundation, 2000; Curtis and Lucas, 2001; Pratten and Curtis, 2002). In common with these sources, the staff profile of 'Stephensons' and 'Breeze' is dominated by young, single people (under 30 years of age), predominantly working part-time, and containing a high proportion of university and college students. The age profile remained consistent across both brands, as did the gender split, with a slight majority of male workers (52%) evident in both brands. Part-time employment accounted for 66% of the interviewees (34 out of 52). None of these features are out of line with the Hospitality Training Foundation Report (2000) indicating that 57% of the hospitality industry's total labour force was part-time, up to 73% in bar work.

6.3.2 Recruitment: a student workforce

The participation of university and college students in the licensed retail workforce has been highlighted by Curtis and Lucas (2001), building on earlier work by Lucas and Ralston (1997), and pointing to the flexibility and qualities of such a mainly part-time workforce of intelligent and articulate individuals. As participation in further and higher education has risen sharply, this is reflected in statistics which demonstrate that the number of students in part-time work has increased four-fold to over one million (Labour Market Trends, 1998). Analysis of the biographical data captured in the interviews shows that both brands actively recruited undergraduate students and other students from colleges of further education. As a result, there was an equivalent level of educational attainment within the workforces of both 'Stephensons' and 'Breeze' brands.

Student employees interviewed included current undergraduates as well as graduates who remained in their pub sector employment after graduation. Such employees made up more than three-quarters of the interviewees, equally distributed across the brands. They had studied a wide range of degree disciplines, from business studies and law, to advertising, geology, engineering, molecular biology, pharmacology, psychology and hotel and catering management. These individuals related how they had arrived at university from homes across the country and overseas, and had acquired part-time pub work out of a need for income to support their student expenses, particularly their own lifestyle and social activities. Most interviewees reported that the income helped to support living expenses rather than university tuition fees that were covered by student loans. As a result it can be seen that the initial purpose and motivation for getting the work was highly instrumental in nature, namely to earn some money.

The adoption of an adapted life and work history research method within the interview design allowed for exploration as to how such individuals ended up in longer-term employment within the licensed retail sector. For two of the pub managers, graduates in Applied Physics and Pharmacology, it had been a case of finding part-time work and income during their studies, only to find that they enjoyed the work in pubs so much that a job and career in licensed retail became a serious option, facilitated by the geographical replication of the brand across the country:

“ Studied at University of Aberdeen, Applied Physics, as I liked the subject, liked the problem-solving aspect....went to Aberdeen because a close friend

went there and after I visited him, seemed like a good place.....then started working for 'Stephensons' in Aberdeen, getting bar experience during the degree course.....after graduating I went home to Glasgow and found a part-time job with 'Stephensons' in Glasgow....through a co-worker I met in the Aberdeen unit....she approached me about a job and said there could be a career in it."

'Stephensons' Pub Manager, Manchester

This manager expressed the view that though his degree content was not directly relevant to his current job, the problem-solving and analytical skills were still important. For another manager, the gradual move to pub management came out of disenchantment with the chosen degree discipline and his aptitude for licensed retailing:

"My original degree didn't seem to offer any opportunities at the time and to be frank I had got bored with it...I just took to pub work straight away and have been pleased the way things have gone with the company."

'Breeze' Pub Manager, Leicester

Other students who had completed their courses successfully, yet remained within the pub sector, rationalised the apparent mis-match between educational qualifications and job and career choice by referring to the potential for combining job skills and academic knowledge. An art and design graduate wanted to own his own country pub with an art gallery theme; a graduate of sociology and politics spoke of the subjects being useful for conversations with customers and that knowledge of people and behaviour was very relevant to many awkward, social situations in pubs; some interviewees said that their degree subject was now more of a hobby, such as art, design, sport, architecture; several graduates spoke of utilising their more generic, transferable undergraduate skills more greatly as they gained more supervisory and managerial responsibility. These responses are in line with

comments by Pratten and Curtis (2002) who refer to the pub management potential of many students who begin by working part-time in licensed retail during their university studies.

A further group of employees within both brands had ended up by working in the sector due to dropping out from their courses in colleges and universities, as illustrated by the following responses:

“I went to Henley FE College at 16 to do a Performing Arts NVQ course, because I wanted a singing and dancing career....did a year at it but it didn't work out for me....left home at 18...got a job here.”
‘Stephensons’ Bar Staff Member

“Went to Leeds Metropolitan; degree in Business Studies....completed Year 1, but didn't get on with it and got a placement in ‘Pubs & Bars’ group, stayed on after the placement and didn't go back to Uni.”
‘Stephensons’ Bar Team Leader

“Started a BA in American Studies with History of Art at De Montfort in 2000.... but it wasn't what I thought it would be, not my sort of thing, so just kept on here and really enjoyed it, still here.... so can't be too bad.”
‘Stephensons’ Bar Staff Member

“After secondary school in Aylesbury and then Hinkley Island Leicester when my father's job moved here....did a GNVQ and National Diploma at college here and then went to Leicester Uni for an Arts degree....didn't finish.”
‘Breeze’ Bar Staff Member

“I'm a BA Year 2....Psychology and Sociology....but retaking it as things went badly last year...this job's a life-saver for the money, and it's a good laugh too.”
‘Breeze’ Bar Staff Member

This profile of the interviewees participating in the research study confirms the scenario of undergraduates finding work within the pub sector for income. The work is readily available and relatively undemanding in entry-level skill needs. However, the sector also attracts those that are disillusioned with their courses and higher education life, and those that actually find a sector in which they enjoy working and in some cases, eventually see career potential. There is also the case of qualified graduates staying on in the pub job after graduation, waiting for the right career job to come along, or even taking a type of ‘gap’ year by working in a place and a job they have come to like. One employee, a bar staff team member with a Masters degree in Aerospace Engineering from the University of Manchester, said that he would remain working in the pub, “until something better comes along”, adding enthusiastically:

“I enjoy the work, useful for money and meeting people...the sector has a lot of attractiveness as a temporary job....it is accessible, a low skill base, once in you can soon pick up the skills needed, it’s good for outgoing people....good fun for the right type of person.”

‘Breeze’ Bar Staff Member

6.3.3 Work history

Along with the retail sector, the hospitality industry provides many young people with their first entry into the world of work. Fast food chains employ many people from the age of 16, and it has been reported that McDonald’s UK operation has a workforce of which 71% is under the age of 20 years (Royle, 1999). The high profile of hospitality chains in the high streets and shopping centres of UK towns and cities is a factor in attracting young people to such employment, and nationally recognised

chains of pub brands have grown rapidly across the country in recent years (Knowles and Egan, 2002). Town-centre pub brands and retail brands have become important symbols of contemporary lifestyle, meeting places that attract young people as both customers and as potential employees. In the responses to questions about the ‘Stephensons’ and ‘Breeze’ employees’ prior work experience and how they had entered employment within the pub sector, the hospitality and retail sectors dominated as the first entry points for young workers:

“Had about 4 months working for Clinique before....but it was city centre and it was a long trip from home so I was in here one day and asked if they had any jobs and here I am....lucky move.”

‘Stephensons’ Bar Staff Member

“When I left college, first job...I worked for Superdrug, retail seemed easy to get into, and I quite liked the promotional side, selling, talking to customers, but it was only part-time so at same time I started another part-time job at a local Jazz Club, floor work....started serving drinks, being more involved....loved the atmosphere.”

‘Breeze’ Bar Staff Member

“Family used to come drinking to this pub, and it seemed friendly and lively, so I asked about a job....I used to come here with family as a customer.”

‘Stephensons’ Bar Staff Member

“Came in here with some friends one night, and thought it had a good atmosphere.”

‘Breeze’ Bar Staff Member

“So left school and did the sports course....whilst at college started part-time waiting in a local restaurant, then moved to the kitchen....liked it so much I took on a work-base apprenticeship linked to college.”

‘Breeze’ Kitchen Team Leader

Interviewees reported a wide range of hospitality industry jobs as their first employment, including restaurants, budget hotels, hotel housekeeping, a smoothie bar, pubs local to their family home, fast food outlets, racecourse corporate hospitality, and kitchen work. Some of these roles were influential later in deciding where, as a student for example, part-time work and income-generation might be feasible and readily available in many locations. Only in two cases did the first hospitality job lead to a decision to study hospitality management in some form and embark on a career in the industry. Most reflected that they had viewed the work as temporary, a passing phase which was useful in terms of money and some life and social skills. The sector was also considered attractive because of its geographical distribution through the national chains of pubs, restaurants and hotels, enabling a wide availability of part-time work in a variety of places.

Other employees, describing a longer and more varied background of work experience spoke about a non-related work history that had become difficult. They had found a new type of employment within the licensed retail sector. In common with most of the other employees, they found themselves working in the pub business as a consequence of other decisions about life and work, not as a result of a planned determination to pursue such a career:

“Did administration and clerical work....for 5 years, mostly local government in Hertford....County Hall....was married, now divorced, but living with new partner, got very bored with office work and stuck in an office syndrome....moved to London with new partner and found the pub job and I like it.”

‘Breeze’ Bar Staff Member

“When I left the admin job I was quite depressed about work....thought I was only trained for one very boring job....but since coming here....and almost by accident finding myself in this pub, it’s been really good...coupled with my personal life being happier.”

‘Breeze’ Bar Team Leader

“Main role after graduating was working in Sheffield Children’s Hospital in Genetics department....5 years after graduating. Resigned as I felt I was no longer in a career I enjoyed or cared sufficiently about....just no longer held me....or fascinated me.”

‘Breeze’ Assistant Manager

6.3.4 Entering the workforce

Pub managers across both the brands reported that the recruitment model for their pub staff was closely allied to three local labour pools: university students; local non-university individuals, often looking for a first job after school or college; and other local residents finding part-time bar work a useful interim income whilst searching for something more related to their career preference. External recruitment methods such as advertising in the press were not required, as managers found new employees by word of mouth through the network of students and locals, or sometimes through the job centre. Typical responses in the interviews emphasised the networking recruitment methods:

“A friend said that this pub was a cool place to work....and so I applied here....about a year ago.”

‘Stephensons’ Bar Staff Member

“I saw a leaflet in the student bar about part-time jobs here and just came along, had a chat with the manager and he gave me a start.”

‘Breeze’ Bar Staff Member

Managers of outlets in both brands reported sometimes posting job vacancy notices in the university and college students' union offices, but more often than not, word of mouth from one student to another provided sufficient candidates. However, managers reported that they did not want to rely totally on student labour, as this would cause problems out of term-time, with many students returning home for vacation periods. As a result, attracting a locally resident workforce was also crucial to continuity. A subtle variation on this was related by a 'Stephensons' pub manager in Manchester who expressed satisfaction in an employment model which saw term-time students being replaced during vacations by students from other universities returning home to Manchester for the holidays and picking up part-time work. All employees across the entire company were subject to the same terms and conditions of employment, all such contractual details being set by the 'Pubs & Bars plc' central HRM department.

6.3.5 Socialisation and induction

The process of employee induction is a significant first step in the successful introduction of a new colleague into an organisation and a work group, and the individual comes to this process of socialisation with natural feelings of insecurity and apprehension (Boella, 1996). The diversity of new workforce members (for example age, education, gender, class, and ethnicity) is shaped by, and reconciled with, the prevailing culture of the organisation. The organisation's management seeks to homogenize a diverse workforce through a process of induction and socialisation, or enculturation as described by Ogbor (2001: 6), aiming for an

effective introduction to the work and for efficiency in the job that is quickly acquired. The new recruit seeks to be accepted professionally and socially by the existing unit managers and direct co-workers, needing to learn quickly the norms of behaviour expected within the work group as a sub-culture, to be accepted by the group members and to assimilate the workplace expectations inherent in the psychological contract of the organisation (Tyson and York, 2002; Lucas, 2004). Such a complex process requires careful management planning to be effective, and if new staff members do not settle into their new role and surroundings, there can be a significant impact on labour turnover and retention (Seymour and Sandiford, 2005; Yang, 2008), the peak rates of turnover in the licensed retail sector occurring in the first three months (Lashley, 2000).

In terms of the induction and socialisation of 'Pubs & Bars plc' employees, a change in managerialist approach from the organisation as a whole became evident during the field-work. Up to this point, the 'Pubs & Bars plc' company had only been responsible for the recruitment and appointment of managers of the pub outlets. It was not involved in the somewhat informal means of recruiting new staff members, other than the HRM department setting nationwide wage-rates and all other terms and conditions. However, in contrast to the apparently unsystematic and informal methods of recruitment and selection for pub employees, there now emerged a highly systematic set of policies and procedures for the induction and initial training of new recruits. Interviewees across all the units gave accounts of the induction programme as highly organised and systematic, and as a process carried out by the manager using company literature and checklists, a system described by one team leader as

“something put in by head office”. By examining the relevant company documentation as well as reviewing the responses from interviewees, it was evident that ‘Pubs & Bars plc’ was ensuring that the central HRM department’s induction process transmitted certain messages regarding the company’s purpose, values and beliefs to every new employee. This process of socialisation into the corporate organisational culture will now be considered alongside that of the central HRM approach, as it became increasingly evident that the overall company viewed HRM initiatives as a conduit for relaying messages relative to employee attitudes, values and behaviour.

6.4 Corporate culture espoused and HRM policies

‘Pubs & Bars plc’ has developed an induction and training programme known as *Stepping Stones*, to be implemented in every outlet of the company, whatever the brand. This initiative developed out of a corporate policy commitment to ensuring that every employee receives an appropriate induction into the company, and receives effective job training. *Stepping Stones* is operated and monitored through the central, head office-based HRM department of the company. The basic principles of corporate branding have been applied to this project, the programme possessing its own logo, presentation and print style. The content and messages within the programme are firmly predicated on specific underlying assumptions and principles, particularly customer service. It is implemented across all brands, every pub, and therefore should be experienced by all staff. Indeed, within the interviewees for this research project, there was universal awareness of the *Stepping Stones* programme

and acknowledgement that an induction programme had taken place when they had commenced their employment.

A review of company documentation, coupled with discussions with managers, revealed a highly structured approach to induction and initial job training, beginning with the issuing of a *Team Member Handbook* for each employee. Pub managers confirmed in interviews that they must keep a team member record system, tracking the induction plan, the training plan and the progress of each employee against a *Starter Pack Checklist*. The employee's documentation, the handbook, is attractively presented and printed on high quality paper. The first page, *Welcome*, is dominated by the sub-heading of *Company Vision and Purpose*, and the following sections are headed *Jargon, Our Customers, Identifying Customers and Customer Service*. The prominence of these topics indicates the agenda of the corporate and HR strategy in terms of the concentration on the customer and customer service, the espoused purpose and values of the firm and the jargon and language that will influence discourse within the workplace culture.

The first page stresses the company's strategic aim: "*To be the UK's leading pub, bar and restaurant operator.....we will be the No. 1 choice for food, drinks and hospitality.*" Such calculative, rational and strategic objectives for the company move quickly into the 'softer', employee development aspirations: "*We are committed to the continuing training and development of the people who make our business a success—You!*" The rest of the handbook addresses a set of topics related

to training and development and career possibilities, and then to the statutory aspects of health and safety legislation, ending with the formal terms and conditions of employment.

6.4.1 Customer service and surveillance

The content and tone of the *Team Member Handbook* reflects earlier research findings concerning induction in the licensed retail sector by Pratten (2003) and by Lashley and Best (2002: 9), the latter authors concluding that induction programmes are, “focused on the companies’ agenda, rather than meeting the social and psychological needs of the new employees.” The ‘Pubs and Bars plc’ handbook is undoubtedly a helpful guide for those first few days, but its detailed and assertively prescriptive approach to customer service gives no mention of the challenge, difficulty and stress associated with customer service in a pressurised work environment. Quite the contrary, the challenge appears to be easily overcome by recourse to a number of straight-forward instructions. The following quotations, featuring important use of language and terminology, are taken from the *Customer Service* section:

“It’s so simple every time!”

“Be open, welcoming, non-defensive”

“Look at each person and remember you smile with your eyes”

“Smile”

“Don’t wait until they speak, initiate the conversation”

“Always say please, thank you and good-bye”

“Go the Extra Mile”

“Delight your customers”

“Treating our customers as you would a guest in your own home”

This illustrates the corporate organisation’s strong and pre-eminent service culture message, imparted to all new starters from their first working day, an immediate attempt to influence behaviour and attitudes. Managers confirmed that the importance of influencing attitudes and behaviour towards a customer service culture were key sessions on their recent ‘Purpose and Values’ training workshops. The message aims to develop the commitment of the new employees to the customer-oriented organisation to which they now belong. Apprehensive new employees look to their colleagues for support, for a shared meaning and understanding of the message (Morgan, 1986) and for approval of their subsequent behaviour (see Trice and Beyer, 1993: 182). Yet such messages are also intertwined in the same handbook with unequivocal statements of the corporate approaches to control and surveillance, checking the standards of employees’ work and ensuring the commercial success of the strategy:

“We have a Mystery Customer Programme that measures our service standards”

“We need to constantly measure ourselves against the standards”

“This is done by our Mystery Customer Programme”

“The Mystery Customer Report for your pub can be found on the team notice-board”

“Activity: Go to your team notice-board and read your pub’s last Mystery Customer Report”.

Within such an influential document for new entrants into the organisation and into the work groups within every pub, these extracts reflect research output from the hospitality and retail sectors which juxtaposes the managerial emphasis on controlling employee behaviour and emotions (see Ogbonna and Harris, 2002: 49), with the need to ensure compliance to this set of behavioural tenets through training and 'learning' the emotion rules (Seymour and Sandiford, 2005), surveillance and systematic checking (see Ogbonna and Harris, 1998). The company provides instruction or a restricted code to its employees in how to act and behave, through what Douglas (1973; 1996) would term the rules, classification and social values of an imposed culture, a 'conservative hierarchy'. There is also a system for verifying that the employee is displaying the appropriate behaviour and emotions of the code.

The focus for such behaviour is the customer, imbued with a supreme authority and power by the organisation. The customer's expectations need to be exceeded. The customer needs to be 'delighted', not only in the language of the 'enchanted myth of customer sovereignty' (Korczynski, 2002), but also in the language of the corporate handbook itself. The customer is considered as a rational player in the service encounter culture (*'a guest in your own home'*) but there is no instruction in how to deal with operational difficulties, with the stress and pressure of emotional labour. Nor is there any recognition of what Korczynski would term the employee's need to respond to the customer's formally rational requirement for efficient service and the simultaneously irrational need for 'enchantment' (2002: 60), as in the model of the customer-oriented bureaucracy.

6.4.2 Corporate HRM influence on the employee

The company documentation, common to both brands within the research study, is a corporate HRM production, which attempts to set minimum standards for induction and training across more than 2,000 businesses that employ over 40,000 workers. At one level the systems of induction and training are HR-led processes designed to communicate customer service values, acquire employee commitment and maximise performance (Boxall and Purcell, 2003). At another level, it is a corporate manifestation, a set of signs and symbols of the organisation's strategy and espoused culture. It openly attempts to direct and manage the behaviour of new employees in line with its desired, customer service-oriented culture. This approach can be related to the corporate culture interpretation of organisational culture that sees culture as something an organisation 'has', something that can be influenced and changed by management in order to improve performance and commitment. Even at this stage of the individual employee's journey into the organisation, brand and pub, there is a sense of the simultaneous application of 'hard' and 'soft' HR practices, of ensuring behavioural compliance through bureaucratic controls, yet wanting employees to go the extra mile in giving customer satisfaction (see Legge, 2005:11).

The 'Pubs & Bars plc' corporate HR strategy for induction and training can be analysed against the anthropological model of Douglas (1973), attempting to encourage cohesion, belonging and positive relationships (*group*) yet imposing a range of constraints, controls, rules and regulations (*grid*). The employees are called '*Team Members*', who have team meetings and possess their own team notice-board.

The constraints are detailed by the rigid process and assertions of the *Stepping Stones* training programme and other regulations. The employee's compliance to the instruction is also verified and checked through anonymous surveillance by the mystery customers sent in by the organisation to report on the team member's performance in service provision. Within the company induction procedures, the strongly behavioural opening sections give way to the need for compliance of a more overt nature, the need to abide by policies and legislation, company rules and regulations. The corporate head office need for verification of compliance is well illustrated in the final sentences of the handbook:

"Good luck with your Stepping Stones!"

"Have you signed all of the necessary documents?"

"One copy of the completed induction form to be sent to HR Administrator at Head Office".

From the employee interviews, the reaction to the first few days as organisational members was generally positive in terms of the systematic company procedures, clearly defined job details and welcoming, helpful colleagues. The instrumental motivation and orientation of new recruits seemed to be satisfied, even impressed by the high quality documentation and the planned, systematic approach to induction. Employees were also often unaware that they were joining a very large company, not just a stand-alone pub:

"Yeah there is a lot of procedures you have to follow....and the assistant manager was showing me all the forms when I started, all the paperwork she has to do....I didn't know how big 'Pubs & Bars' was."

'Stephensons' Bar Staff Member

“I realised from day one that it is a massive organisation and it needs certain systems, to check standards and procedures....once you realise that you can be cool about it.”

‘Breeze’ Bar Staff Member

The corporate and universal approach to induction aims to communicate the core values of the “Pubs & Bars plc” company to all employees, to set minimum service standards across all brands, and to orientate the employees towards the customer-driven service culture. These HRM policies and procedures are certainly aiming to gain employee commitment to the espoused corporate culture regarding customer service. Within the two brands of this research study, managers and staff reported that the corporate handbooks and associated HR procedures were implemented without exception. Indeed, at this early stage of employment there is a commonality between the two brands at all locations: employees are recruited from the same pools of labour; they are recruited utilising the same methods and approaches; the profile of the workforce is very similar in terms of demographics, educational attainment and work experience; all the workers are employed on identical terms and conditions; all employees receive the same induction and initial training programmes supported by the same corporate handbooks containing the same content regarding corporate values, expected behaviours and the emphasis on customer service. This section now reviews the training and development approach of the company that follows the initial induction stage.

6.4.3 Training and development plans

In tracing the influence of corporate culture and central HRM policies and procedures, this section now reviews the data obtained from the interviews and documentary analysis concerning the training and development activity beyond the induction programme. The *Stepping Stones* induction programme and the *Team Member Handbook* precedes the introduction of a further corporate HRM policy and production, a *Stepping Stones Workbook*, printed in the same, 'branded' style and at the same level of quality. The *Workbook* is a personalised record of the training and development progress of each team member. There are a series of training checklists, consisting of tasks and tests that have to be followed sequentially by the employee being trained, satisfactory completion of the tasks being signed off by an assessor, normally a team leader or a member of the pub's management. The topics of the workbook cover legal requirements, customer service, product knowledge, communication, service standards, stock and cash control, maximising sales, training and development opportunities, and finally, how the employee may also become an assessor. This system is applied rigorously across both brands within the study.

There was a predominantly positive response from employees concerning the training received during their initial employment with 'Pubs & Bars plc'. Interviewees felt that this training phase was well organised and gave them a good start. With such a large number of part-time, peripheral workers within the organisation, the company is insistent that all staff, however few their weekly hours of work, must engage with the *Stepping Stones* programme. The developmental

context of the training, detailed in the handbook, is in line with the company strategy on service standards and on due diligence with regard to statutory obligations. It is also a product of centralised HR policies and procedures, emphasising the ‘soft’ HRM model, conceptualising employees as human assets to be nurtured and developed, ensuring competitive advantage through their commitment and capabilities (Guest, 1987; Storey, 1987). The following extracts are taken from the *Team Member Handbook*:

“Our training programmes offer every employee the chance of a real career with our Company. Many of our Managers have worked their way up the career ladder and many of the corporate team started their careers working in an outlet.”

“We pride ourselves on encouraging and supporting our employees to reach their full potential with us.”

“Helping you to understand your job and feel confident are the key priorities of Stepping Stones. Through Training and Development we hope you will be able to work well as part of a team.”

“We believe that everyone who contributes to our success should be able to share in it. That’s why we’ve developed a Company Share Scheme.”

In terms of the organisation’s goal of gaining employee commitment through training and development, the interviews with employees revealed two stages. The first stage concerned the employees’ initial experience of employment within the

organisation, individuals expressing that they were impressed by the systematic planning and quality of the induction and initial on-job training, exemplified by the step-by-step training and checklists. This approach was appreciated by undergraduate students who empathised with a process that was itself educational, planned and developmental. Those undergraduates with previous hospitality industry experience stated that they felt that the training they had received in their current job was much better than in the past, and indicated that they perceived this approach as a display of commitment from the organisation, to which they responded favourably.

The second stage, frequently mentioned by longer service employees, was the extensive skills development programme (on and off-job) which could lead to a *'Pubs & Bars plc' Management Foundation Course*, and another programme leading to the employee being a *Personal License Holder*. This latter qualification was enshrined in the most recent review of the UK Licensing Laws, enabling an individual to hold a personal license, of value in a sector of substantial labour mobility. Such opportunities were well received by individuals, and were interpreted positively by these employees as evidence of the company's commitment to its employees and their development. This is an example of integrated HR systems and initiatives contributing effectively to the development of employee (continuance) commitment, alongside more affective elements (Boxall, 1996; Boxall and Purcell, 2003). The following representative responses by employees illustrate this developmental approach by the company:

“Well I started with the basics, bar service, safety, customer service, and also food hygiene training and the kitchen training on due diligence....then team

leader training, key-holder training.....then the Management Foundation Course and the Personal License training course....yes it's been really good....only came for a part-time job in first year at uni, but think I might join the company when I graduate now.”

‘Breeze’ Team Leader / Assistant Manager Designate

“Did health and safety, food hygiene and the Management Foundation Course....hoping to go for the personal license soon.”

‘Stephensons’ Team Leader

“With ‘Breeze’, I’ve done a load of courses---really good to get the personal license, which they pay for....I’ve done Management Foundation Course and been on a Management Assessment Centre for assistant manager job, passed it...so I’m waiting for a position now.”

‘Breeze’ Team Leader

These comments were typical of an extremely positive set of interviewee responses regarding their personal development since they joined the organisation. The initial motivation of these employees was largely connected with obtaining a conveniently located part-time job for income purposes only, one which had shift patterns that could normally be worked around classes and studying, and where the skills were not considered too demanding. However, the systematic training programmes across both brands, as part of a corporate HR strategy, appeared to raise awareness in already intelligent individuals to the potential for learning, skills development and possible qualifications. This was perceived as a very positive aspect of employment.

The developmental aspect of training indicates that HR strategy can lead to policies and processes which impact on the behaviour and attitudes of employees, and can influence commitment levels and intentions to stay in the job, and therefore have the

potential to reduce labour turnover. As one employee, an undergraduate at Reading University, stated:

“You really feel that even a part-time job can have benefits in getting you somewhere, like the personal license and other courses....I’ve got mates working in other pubs and they don’t get that, they get more per hour, but can’t get any quals...that makes it worth it to me to stay here. And I like the people here.”

‘Breeze’ Bar Staff Member

The quotations within this section regarding the employees’ perceived value of developmental training plans and qualifications are examples of evidence from the interviews that points to the contribution of such HR activities to developing employee commitment. The work of Allen and Meyer (1990) is apposite regarding these issues and the links between attitudinal commitment and behavioural commitment. In the example quoted above, this employee has experienced membership of the ‘Breeze’ pub positively (affective commitment), and has also determined to stay with the organisation because of the developmental nature of the training and the possibility of associated qualifications (continuance commitment). Legge (2005: 215) terms such continuance commitment as “accumulated ‘side bets’”, supported by a lack of more attractive alternative jobs. For longer service employees such ‘side bets’ could include participation in the share-save scheme as well. In the case of pub workers in large city centres, there appeared to be many alternative job opportunities, but company-wide training and development policies and procedures at ‘Pubs & Bars plc’ seemed to be an element which discouraged such mobility or ‘job-hopping’ (Ghiselli, 1974).

Such a continuance type of commitment to the organisation as a whole was also encouraged by HR policies linking training and development programmes to the possibility of internal transfer and mobility within the ‘Pubs & Bars plc’ company, including movement within and across brands. Once employees realised the size, scope and geographical distribution of the firm, they began to appreciate the potential for career progression, despite changing their place of work through the internal transfer scheme:

“Right now I’m working for the pub and the manager...but ‘Pubs & Bars’ are everywhere so that’s a bonus if you move and can get a job through the company before you go or when you go.”

‘Breeze’ Bar Staff Member

“There is a lot of admin., control, lot of rules but then I realise it is a very big company and with that there are benefits such as the training schemes and if you get on well but need to move, the internal vacancy system.”

‘Breeze’ Kitchen and Bar Staff Member

6.4.4 Career progression

The in-depth discussions enabled the researcher to encourage the interviewees to reflect on their company training, development and career progression to date and to consider future directions. In this way, employees were able to focus on themselves, expressing how they felt about their life goals and ambitions as well as their current role within a specific sector as an employee. Longer service respondents, mainly the managers and other senior staff, were able to reflect on the nature of their progress within the company, the influence of the corporate organisation and the specific brand, to which considerable loyalty was apparent. There were reflections on such

matters as their rate of progress, the potential for internal mobility, their commitment to brand and company, and their personal development as supervisors and managers.

“Things moved pretty quickly....there came up a relief manager job at Hamilton and then again in 1999 in Peterborough, before I went back to Glasgow.... A big unit in Sauchiehall Street....as Assistant Manager and I did that for 2 years when Didsbury came up....good size for your first manager job and I've really liked it. So I've been with 'Stephensons' ever since graduating 9 years ago.”

‘Stephensons’ Pub Manager, Manchester

This comment exemplifies the possibility of a part-time worker, in this case a science undergraduate, becoming opportunistically involved in a sector and a specific pub brand, and finding a future career choice. This choice was encouraged and supported by training and rapid development through supervisory and assistant management positions, and by the individual's satisfaction within that brand and its characteristics. This employee saw the benefit of a large company, not just the brand, as a vehicle for future career development, towards area management in this case. The potential for management development and mobility within a multi-site, multi-brand business is important, but it is set alongside a strong loyalty and commitment to a certain brand, the intimate knowledge of that brand as a cultural setting for everyday life in pub management:

“I have been with 'Pubs & Bars' since leaving university....so that's about 11 years, 8 of them with 'Breeze'....starting as bar staff here in Leicester, then over the following periods, have progressed from Assistant manager in Birmingham to Manager in Coventry and then Manager in Cheltenham...and I really like the brand....the moves have been organised by the company mostly through Regional Business Managers.”

‘Breeze’ Pub Manager, Leicester

This internal mobility within a particular brand was a feature of the longer service staff, illustrating the success of the corporate HR internal transfer system itself, but also the strong personal bond with a particular brand. The difficulty of replicating and reproducing a strong corporate culture across multi-site service operations has been considered within the literature (Ogbonna, 1992), yet the highly defined corporate branding of the brands studied for this thesis appears to give corporate management some level of influence over employees, as over time they increasingly identify with the brand. With internal movement across the brand, the employees themselves facilitate the replication of the brand's proposition, including its cultural characteristics. The following statements from pub managers and other senior staff exemplify this position:

“I would like to manage a bigger ‘Stephensons’ house, possibly Cardiff or Birmingham Broad Street. Then perhaps change to a corporate career.”
‘Stephensons’ Pub Manager, Reading

“In 2001 joined ‘Breeze’, career promotion to Assistant Manager in Oxford, followed by shortish spells at High Wycombe and Peterborough before getting first Manager job in 2003 in Leicester. Only moved to get experience of different units in the brand, learn about the brand.”
‘Breeze’ Pub Manager, Leicester

“Well, while I’m fairly young I think ‘Breeze’ is great, lively and informal....maybe later I might want to change.”
‘Breeze’ Pub Manager, London

“Very content to be here for some time....don’t think area management is for me....possibly something at the centre in the long term....Electronic Leisure Department or even Risk and Compliance....see no move away from ‘Pubs & Bars’, and ‘Breeze’....even though I’ve been around for nearly 10 years, I still like this brand, its style, atmosphere and culture.”
‘Breeze’ Pub Manager, Manchester

“Well I’ve got to finish off my management degree exams....I want to stay with ‘Stephensons’ and as I’ve only ever worked here I think that in a year or two it would be good to move to another ‘Stephensons’ house as an Assistant Manager and then if things worked out, I would like to be an LHM (Licensed House Manager). Longer term I’d love my own pub....one with lots of great music, entertainment, lots of dancing on the tables and that type of place.”

‘Stephensons’ Team Leader

“I’m using ‘Pubs & Bars’ for the future....I want my own pub, be my own boss....would like to link the business to the art and designmy degree subject....I can see a pub with galleries of art....long time away that’s for sure....but I’ll get a good training here.”

‘Breeze’ Team Leader

A notable feature of the interviews with employees was their articulation of an enjoyment and satisfaction in working in the pub sector, often comparing the sector favourably with other work experiences. Career progression became a possibility, a possibility not considered at the time of recruitment. Staff would often refer to aspects such as the atmosphere, the music and social interaction with colleagues and with customers. This awakening to a job that can actually be enjoyable reflected positively on the brand in which they worked, and can be seen as a significant factor in the development of commitment and loyalty to the brand:

“Started in a ‘Stephensons’ house in Reading, part-time then full-time kitchen and bar work, becoming Team Leader 2 for a year before Assistant Manager in same pub. Worked in night clubs before that, but didn’t seem to be getting anywhere....no training just long and very late unsocial hours....best thing I ever did coming here.”

‘Stephensons’ Assistant Manager, Reading

“Got on with the Manager, loved the work and the staff and customers, became Team Leader and got promotion to Assistant Manager recently....really proud of what I’ve done really...it’s always good to come to work.”

‘Breeze’ Assistant Manager, Reading

“While at school I did a bit of work at Tesco....it was mundane and tedious! Mum owned a bar so the business was in the family....got a part-time job in a restaurant as a waiter for about 18 months whilst doing A levels. Like the atmosphere here, good music and I’m enjoying it so far.”

‘Breeze’ Part-Time Bar Staff Member

“When I came to Uni in Manchester I got a job in T K Max, but that was really boring, no fun at all.”

‘Breeze’ Bar Staff Member

“Before that I worked in Burger King in my second year at Uni....that was dire....on the fryers....no care at all in what was being done and I really like the food side of the business....always liked cooking.....think it’s the links between chemistry and food.”

‘Breeze’ Kitchen Staff Member

The area of occupational work where there was less expression of enjoyment and satisfaction was the kitchen work, essentially a back of house role within these pubs, and with limited career progression opportunities owing to central production and de-skilling at unit level. In kitchen work there are a great number of rules and regulations regarding hygiene, health and safety, risk and compliance, and due diligence, adding to the constraints on individuals. The social interaction aspects of being front of house were also eliminated due to the kitchen location. Standardisation of menus and food production across pub chains has also affected the skill levels required from food preparation employees.

“It’s Ok here but not exactly much skill required....not much cooked on site....just grills and fries really....and kitchen is a second class citizen I feel....stuck away in the back, all the emphasis seems on bar staff, the training and the courses....I’ve not had any courses so far....already done the food safety certificate....think I’d like to get back to some proper cooking.”

‘Stephensons’ Chef

“I’m demotivated because of all the company rules and forms and reports, and the food quality....it’s deteriorated, all frozen, vac-packed stuff....no skill required in the kitchen.”

‘Breeze’ Chef

6.5 Workplace constraints / *grid*

This section considers the findings from the case study research that relate to the constraints and rules imposed on the employees in their workplace, and reviews the employees' responses in terms of their feelings, perceptions and interpretations of their workplace experience of such controls. The pub sector possesses internal organisational structures of teams and shifts that provide the opportunity for substantial social interaction between employees and other employees, as well as between employees and customers. As was indicated in the previous section, this interaction is initially located within a restrictive *grid* of social controls and constraints imposed by management through the detailed specifications of the corporate HRM approach to critical events in employment such as induction and job training. Socialisation into a customer-orientated service culture is a corporate aim of the universally applied *Stepping Stones* programme and the *Team Member Handbook*.

Through these central HRM initiatives, the corporate culture message is transmitted and its influence is exerted regarding employee attitudes and behaviours, particularly within the service work setting, prescribing appropriate behaviour and ensuring adherence through the control mechanisms of both systematic training checklists and the 'under-cover' surveillance provided by the mystery customer programme. This section recounts perceptions and issues raised by the employees with regard to the constraints placed upon them and addresses crucial differences in the accounts of the employees about their workplace experiences within the 'Stephensons' and 'Breeze'

brands, and how this impacts on their longer-term commitment and employment intentions.

6.5.1 Corporate constraints on employees

Exploratory interviews with executives at ‘Pubs & Bars plc’ revealed that the company ‘creates’ the physical and social setting of the workplace by determining the specifications of the brands themselves, the ‘blueprinted’ detail of the brand proposition to its targeted market. This begins with the physical surroundings in terms of architectural design, décor and fixtures, the production and service systems and the technologies to be incorporated. The brand specification also details the type of atmosphere and ambience being sought and the associated behavioural elements such as style of music and entertainment, as well as the food and beverage offer, activities and events. According to one company executives, “the aim is to create a pub culture that is specific to each brand concept”. As employees enter the organisation at unit level, it is only with the experience of corporate systems and structures such as induction, training, contracts of employment and employment rules that it becomes apparent to the workforce that behind the specific pub is a brand, and behind the brand is a very large company. The early employee perception of ‘the company’ is characterised by it being seen as the seat of remote power:

“As far as being part of a big company is concerned, I only realise it when we have staff meetings and we are told, ‘you have to do this or that’.”

‘Breeze’ Bar Staff Member

As reported earlier, corporate literature and documentation is then supplemented during the working experience by corporate policy and procedures, and the ‘head office’ becomes a remote centre of control and bureaucracy, reflecting the ‘Big Man’

concept from the anthropological analysis of culture by Douglas (1973). The ‘Pubs & Bars plc’ company is viewed by staff of all grades as an ultimate control over of the ways of working, the source of changes, instructions and regulations. Responses from the employee interviewees used the language and phrases associated with a system of centralised control: they felt that, “there are a lot of procedures to follow”; “lot of red tape.... little chance to put in new ideas....lot of guidelines and it’s all very standardised”; “some central commands, if I can put it like this, they do not always seem to make sense, like the posters sent out recently that we had to put up.”

Across both brands, employees spoke in terms which exemplified this view of the overall company as a remote and powerful organisation, determining the standards and the procedures, the promotions and the menus, the theme and style of the brands, and the way that staff are trained and managed to behave in certain ways. In the exploratory discussions, prior to the field-work, senior managers expressed their concern at the amount of bureaucracy and corporate control that had accompanied the company’s expansion. The following quotation from a ‘Stephensons’ regional director, during an interview in one of the pubs, exemplifies this recognition but ends with a further illustration of the tension between the twin goals of customer service and brand standards:

“We need to get rid of bureaucracy which stifles flair....there’s a fine line between corporate control and unit level flair....good interpersonal skills are essential and they have been missing from some units....here they are very good....though they have still not stuck to the table service standard....I’ll need to have a word.”

‘Stephensons’ Regional Business Manager

Pub managers at unit level appeared relatively sanguine about centralised rules and procedures, expressing a resigned acceptance of the need for such policies within a large multi-site business, though they often expressed their concern at the amount of paperwork and administration which required their daily and weekly attention:

“Being so large, P&B has to be very careful about the law....such as under-age drinkers, so we have lots of policies, lots of due diligence reports....there’s a Risk and Compliance central team for audits and checks....generally they’re all sensible procedures....and I can put forward ideas to my area manager, but all within the protocols of the brand.”

‘Stephensons’ Pub Manager

6.5.2 Employee perceptions of workplace constraints

The fact that most of the operational staff are part-time and had taken the job for instrumental reasons contributed to a sense in some individuals that it was useful, somewhat easier to have highly prescribed standards and duties to follow; “the brand has got a lot of sets of rules you follow, so you know where you are, but you really need to stick to them” (‘Stephensons’ bar staff member). Some employees felt that there was a form of trade-off between the need to follow rules and brand standards with the large company benefits such as career development, mobility, sharesave schemes, pension schemes and other corporate HRM policies, particularly the Personal License Holder courses and qualifications. The theme of strict compliance in following the detailed brand standards was particularly prevalent within the responses from the ‘Stephensons’ employees. In this brand the offer was far more complex and prescribed than in ‘Breeze’. In ‘Stephensons’, brand standards such as the table service example quoted above, were trying to differentiate these pubs from competitors, and the food and beverage offer was wide-ranging for a variety of

customer needs. This is an important differential between the two brands and the employee experience within the workplace. Whilst the employees of both brands worked under the strong *grid* of the corporate and HRM policies regarding customer service, company values and behaviour, the employees of ‘Stephensons’ brand perceived that they had to respond to a further set of brand-level constraints because of the additional demands regarding the service standards, product range and greater range of customer mix:

“Need to follow the instructions and the brand standards don’t we....manager’s keen on that and you can understand that when it’s a chain....we went into another ‘Stephensons’ pub the other night when we were visiting friends in London, and it was really funny to see how they were doing things and some things were different and it didn’t seem right....should all be the same shouldn’t it....otherwise customers don’t know where they are....will I go to the bar or will they serve me at the table sort of issue.”

‘Stephensons’ Team Leader, Reading

“There are a lot of specific standards in ‘Stephensons’ to get used to....like table service offered after the first drink, the different menus and drinks lists....and you get a wide variety of people all needing different types of service....some want to chat and linger, others in for a quick lunch, others want to listen to the music, and others want the Irish thing.”

‘Stephensons’ Team Leader, London

Staff tended to ascribe their criticisms and problems with corporate ‘rules’ to the ‘head office’ rather than unit management, directing their dissatisfaction at the remote corporate monolith, rather than their immediate, on-site superior:

“I would only move because of the money issue, and other companies do pay better....for example as a Team Leader I only get 10 p an hour more than others, £5.45 an hour....ordinary bar staff at other pubs round here can earn £6 or £7 an hour.”

‘Stephensons’ Team Leader

“Working here is OK but you don’t get much thanks, or much guidance and you’re left alone a lot....you can have a laugh some times....I don’t feel strongly committed to the company because I don’t feel it from the company that pays me something around minimum wage.”

‘Breeze’ Bar Staff Member

Dissatisfaction with pay tended to be linked to the difficulties of service under high pressure and stress, and the feeling that in that experience of service tension the individual employee is on their own, unsupported by the company. The company is considered responsible rather than their equally busy colleagues and manager, at this critical moment:

“I’m not thinking of leaving, not yet, I quite like it here....but I do feel often that I’m underpaid for the responsibility....if you’re on your own and in charge it can be very stressful....and 10p an hour for being Team Leader....well the company’s taking the piss, it’s an insult.”

‘Stephensons’ Team Leader

The most frequent negative theme of the interviewee responses regarding constraints, controls and corporate policies centred on the subject of surveillance and the company’s checking and auditing of standards. ‘Pubs & Bars plc’ personnel from outside the unit are considered as ‘head office’ representatives (referred to by several interviewees as the ‘spies’) whose sole purpose is to check, inspect, and ensure compliance with the company and brand standards. Staff expressed strong feelings that these visits are, in effect, checking each individual staff member’s performance. Pub units receive such visits from different specialist managers including area managers, the risk and compliance team, the central food and beverage department, and the electronic machines / games team. These visits are considered by front-line employees as additional company ‘policing’, on top of the internal checking by pub managers and supervisors.

For front line staff, the focus of their concerns over corporate constraints, checks and surveillance was the *Mystery Customer* programme, which features large from ‘Day One’ of the induction programme and within the *Team Member Handbook* reviewed earlier. This scheme was almost universally mistrusted by staff, and was described in interviews as “sneaky”, “underhand” and “just unfair”. One employee described it as, “the company trying to catch you out”, another as “the spies from head office”:

“I think the mystery guest process can be very unfair....that someone comes in on a bad day pretending to be an ordinary customer, when perhaps someone is ill and you are short staffed.... and makes a judgement for the bosses just like that....it seems so unfair when that happens.”

‘Breeze’ Bar and Kitchen Staff Member

The *Mystery Customer* programme and the corporate strategies for surveillance of standards add up to a *grid* dimension and influence on culture across the entire organisation in which behaviour in the workplace is substantially prescribed and there is a lack of scope for individual autonomy. However, as noted earlier and depicted in Figure No.14, differences between the brands emerge from the employee interviews in terms of the extent of workplace constraints and *grid*, and of how it affects their particular workplace and relationships. The next section considers the data from employees of both brands regarding the experience of working within the pub workplace and the level of control and constraint on that work. In this way the perceptions related above concerning the company as a whole can be focused more on the specific brand to assess the causes of divergence in the comparative analysis.

6.5.3 Employee perceptions of working in ‘Stephensons’

The manager of a ‘Stephensons’ pub in Leicester gives a useful summary of a typical ‘Stephensons’ pub business profile, illustrating the breadth of its customer offer:

“The pub has a capacity of 480 customers, busy city centre and retail location, caters for regulars, locals, city folk, residents....the Irish theme appeals to all ages and all types....we have a street café license, the pub’s open all day every day and til 2 am on Friday and Saturday, midnight Wednesday and Thursday....Live music on a Saturday, quiz on a Thursday, Sky Sports TV. I have an Assistant manager, 2 Team Leaders, a Head Chef and 2 part-time chefs, up to 20 part-time bar staff, 2 full-time bar staff, employ a lot of students for bar work.”

‘Stephensons’ Pub Manager, Leicester

This wide variety of customer interaction was celebrated by other managers and supervisors in this brand:

“I’ve always liked ‘Stephensons’....you get all type and ages of customers, I like the live music, the sport TV, the food offer, the table service standards are good....and we do have some great nights, celebrations such as St. Patrick’s Day or the Six Nations Rugby....the Irish theme isn’t in your face but it influences the food, menus, beers, Guinness etc. and it’s been a brand for about 12 years.”

‘Stephensons’ Pub Manager, Didsbury

“I’m very committed to ‘Stephensons’, very loyal to this pub and this brand....don’t like ‘Breeze’ so much....too much in your face. Too many young people, students....here you get a wider range of customer, all ages and types, office workers at lunchtime or just after work, different, younger customers later and some really great regulars....I think the brand is stylish, fun, clean and I like the way we do things in a controlled manner, correct, high service standards.”

‘Stephensons’ Team Leader, Reading

However, in the interview responses from front-line pub employees in ‘Stephensons’, staff were quick to raise their concerns about the more complex customer market mix and the range of product and service standards. Employees who had been connected to the brand for several years pointed to the dilution of the brand’s proposition of an Irish pub theme. They felt that the controls and constraints originally imposed by the corporate branding strategy for a specifically ‘Irish’ pub had been compromised to the detriment of the business. One employee recalled how earlier in the brand’s history, staff had been instructed in what was meant by the ‘craic’ in Irish pubs, that they were to encourage lively conversation and a convivial atmosphere between staff and customers. This had been the prescribed behaviour for employees within the brand-level constraints, but such a behavioural code had dissipated over time with what one manager termed, “corporate compromises with the offer.”

These compromises were attributed to extending the targeted market to appeal to a wider range of customers, with the resultant reduction of the Irish theme within the food and beverage offer, entertainment and events. These changes had an impact on employees and their understanding of what was required:

“With all-day opening and trying to appeal to every single type of customer, the job’s become more stressful, the pressure’s been upped. There’s still the demand for high standards, still the mystery customer visits....but it’s hard....staff don’t know whether it’s an Irish pub or not half the time....and don’t have the time to care.”

‘Stephensons’ Team Leader

A manager who supported the view quoted above, also pointed to the standardisation of procedures across the company as an issue, stating that central HRM initiatives such as *Stepping Stones* and other training procedures were too generic in effect, no instruction regarding the brand or ‘Irishness’. He also commented that such procedures were time-consuming and bureaucratic when you had a high turnover of staff and yet had to maintain the highest standards. Whilst the issue of labour turnover intentions will be considered in detail later in this chapter, it is appropriate to note that the topic was raised frequently in discussions with ‘Stephensons’ employees in specific relation to the constraints imposed by the brand on standards and on customer service behaviour with a wide range of customers:

“There are difficulties in recruitment and retention...difficult to recruit male staff for example, and turnover has been very high, up to 155% in this pub...there are the weekend issues and very late openings...you need 2 sets of staff really, days and nights, I sometimes have to sort 50 application forms a week. Then there’s the training and keeping standards up, following latest corporate promotions and so on.”

‘Stephensons’ Pub Manager

“New staff get all flustered and they’ve got to learn quickly in ‘Stephensons’...all the drinks, beers, the food, menu, promotions and being town centre it gets very packed.”

‘Stephensons’ Team Leader

“The social side is still good when you get a good group on a shift together who know each other and can have a laugh, but very often it’s new staff and it just doesn’t work...they come and go here, I only really know a couple of the current staff.”

‘Stephensons’ Bar Staff Member

“There can be good shifts, good teamwork, when the team stays together long enough, but that doesn’t happen often enough... and we don’t socialise much outside of work, can’t come in here when we’re off, not like ‘Breeze’.”

‘Stephensons’ Team Leader

These comments illustrate some of the employee perceptions regarding the work pressures in this brand created by the corporate branding strategy on the market and the offer. They also introduce the feelings of ‘Stephensons’ staff that their work teams do not have the cohesiveness to deal with such pressures because of their changing membership of teams, the lack of familiarity between group members due to regular turnover. The final comment regarding employee behaviour outside of work time is also of significance when considering the impact of workplace constraints and rules on employees. Within this brand the employees spoke of little social and interpersonal contact between staff outside of work. There is also a workplace rule that staff may not enter the pub premises for their own social purposes when off duty. As the last quote indicates, this is not the case with the ‘Breeze’ brand. Indeed the significance of this difference cannot be overstated as we move on to look at the employee perceptions in ‘Breeze’.

6.5.4 Employee perceptions of working in ‘Breeze’

The essential business characteristics of the brand proposition in ‘Breeze’ emphasise a low price and high volume strategy with low profit margins on food and beverage items, aimed at a relatively confined consumer base, predominantly 18 to 35 years of age. ‘Breeze’ pubs feature lots of ‘meal deals’, generally high carbohydrate and burgers, with low priced wines and beers, served within an ambience dominated by contemporary music linked to music TV channels, as well as sport TV channels, a snooker / pool room and electronic games machines. Regional Business Managers described the brand as attempting to create a ‘clubby’ environment for young adults,

whether students or local residents. This led in many instances to the young locals and student populations mixing to form both the core customer base and the core employee base, a factor noted in other research output within the hospitality industry (Lashley, Thomas and Rowson, 2000; Curtis and Lucas, 2001; Canny, 2002).

The higher performance indicators and lower labour turnover levels in ‘Breeze’ (88%) as compared with ‘Stephensons’ (185%) was a significant issue for senior managers within the overall ‘Pubs & Bars plc’ company. There was consternation that the reasons for such disparity were not fully understood. An Area Director with ‘Stephensons’, interviewed within the fact-finding stage prior to unit-level research, had actually transferred from the ‘Breeze’ brand to ‘Stephensons’:

“I worked for ‘Breeze’ before and that had got the mix right somehow....not sure how, but the atmosphere and the buzz of the staff was really firing....it would be good to identify just how ‘Breeze’ gets it right, what exactly that is I am not sure.”

‘Stephensons’ Regional Operations Director

This senior executive’s reference to the intangible aspect of atmosphere within ‘Breeze’ pubs was echoed in many responses by the employees themselves. Employees frequently expressed their feelings about working in this brand in terms of interpersonal and social aspects of the job and the environment. They closely associated the work experience, and what it meant to them, with their own behaviour and preference, with little mention of working under excessive control and constraint:

“First pub I’ve worked in and it’s cool....meeting people, real social benefits of working here....I like the customers we get too, and I love some of the locals....they’re real fun some of them.”

‘Breeze’ Bar Staff Member

“I really like the values of ‘Breeze’....chilled out, good feel, cheap, good fun.”

‘Breeze’ Bar Staff Member

“I think the brand is great, I like the 18-28 market, the slightly wacky, zany, different way we operate....no script....there’s lots of interaction here, this reduces conflict. There’s a very strong culture in some ways....about wackiness, fun and so on yet the style is very flexible and informal....the brand has real personality and so people need to be in tune with that personality....we ask some wacky questions in interviews like ‘what’s your favourite dinosaur’ and ‘favourite jam flavour’....just to see how they react.”

‘Breeze’ Pub Manager, Leicester

“ ‘Breeze’ has a strong student and young person atmosphere culture but with sufficient leeway that others, including office workers and shoppers feel comfortable to call in for lunch or a drink after work.”

‘Breeze’ Team Leader, Reading

There were repeated and enthusiastic references to the atmosphere and social characteristics of the ‘Breeze’ pubs, with the following words and phrases regularly occurring in their responses during the interviews: “it’s a relaxed place to work”; “informal and friendly crowd here”; “not too many standards and rules”; “casual and laid back, the most fun sector I’ve worked in”; “Oh yes, ‘Breeze’ has a real renowned culture of being fairly relaxed”. Even some employees within ‘Stephensons’ would acknowledge and confirm such descriptions:

“I like ‘Breeze’ though....it’s much more relaxed, less formal, less standards than us and lots of my age range....mind service standards are not much to write home about.”

‘Stephensons’ Bar Staff Member

The reaction of both managers and front line staff in ‘Breeze’ brand to the corporate HR initiatives within induction and training were positive and compliant. Employees reported that they had received good induction and found the training programme effective and enjoyable. There was recognition of the ‘Breeze’ standards and brand proposition, but without contention. It was clear that the market mix of this brand was more limited than ‘Stephensons’; ‘Breeze’s’ is more focused on a particular age group and lifestyle rather than on a wider spectrum of demographics and consumer behaviour. In terms of the hospitality offer, the ‘Breeze’ food and beverage choice is greatly reduced on that available at ‘Stephensons’ in terms of product range, service levels, sophistication and price. In contrast to the ‘Stephensons’ staff, employees in ‘Breeze’ expressed few concerns over constraints and controls in the workplace, rarely referred to rules and standards of performance guidelines.

One area of critical differentiation in the constraints and *grid* on employees of ‘Breeze’ in comparison with those in ‘Stephensons’ was the re-defining of the workplace as a location where you can be both employee and customer, a blurring of the established separation of work space and leisure space. Here there was no rule regarding out of work use of the premises as in ‘Stephensons’. The pub was perceived by staff as a focus of both work and leisure activity, leading to a strong personal and normative commitment to the pub itself, the manager, the staff and the customers, as exemplified by the extracts below:

“I’m on a day off today, but as you see I was in here already having a pint and chatting to mates on both sides of the bar. ‘Breeze’ is great because you socialise and work at the same time.”

‘Breeze’ Bar Staff Member, Leicester

“It’s like a second home here....I use the pub as a customer as well, it’s close to home and uni....”

‘Breeze’ Team Leader, Manchester

“I’m really committed to this place and the people, not just because of the hours I spend here....including socialising....this is like home....you could say like a family....we mostly all get on, even if you’re here on a night off, you’ll help out, collect dirties...”

‘Breeze’ Kitchen Manager, Manchester

“This pub just makes your day....always look forward to coming into work, you can have a good conversation, be really laid back, easy going.... and people are so non-judgmental. Staff help each other out, it’s a must in the culture here....both sides of the bar even.”

‘Breeze’ Chef and Bar Staff Member, Reading

“If I’m in here socially and the bar team are getting hammered, I’ll clear some tables for them to help....that’s what happens here. Then we might all go to a club after.”

‘Breeze’ Bar Staff member, Leicester

There was no stated rule or written policy which declared that it was permissible for staff to use the pubs in ‘Breeze’ for their own leisure purposes, nor was there any to say they could not. This characteristic appeared to have developed in association with the brand’s proposition of informality, leading to the homogenization of work and leisure, a blurring of the meanings which separate work space from leisure space and worker from customer. In the context of *grid* analysis of workplace culture, this blurring of work and leisure is a further important and differentiating factor (in addition to the different constraints on product and service standards noted above), indicative of an overall weaker *grid* of rules and constraints being imposed by the culture of ‘Breeze’ compared to that of ‘Stephensons’. From their responses, the employees in ‘Breeze’ certainly developed informal rules and a shared identity in coping with their work and its constraints, so characteristic of a sub-culture (Noon and Blyton, 2007). Their shared meanings and values concerning the workplace and

behaviour were accommodated and accepted by the brand-level culture and the structures of the organisation around them. This unusual situation was recognised by employees, and interesting responses were received by the researcher when employees were asked whether the use of the pub by employees as customers led to behavioural and relational problems:

“The mix of customers and employees here is a bit unusual I suppose....in that people work and socialise here....one night behind the bar, the next on a night out....but there seem to be few ‘getting out of line’ issues especially with people who work here.”

‘Breeze’ Pub Manager, Leicester

“You don’t shit on your own door step....if anyone gets a bit pissed....yeah someone who also works here....a mate will have a word, people don’t take liberties hardly ever....and if someone has a birthday do here and has a few too many, then it’s good that your mates are with you....including behind the bar to make sure you get home safely....especially the girls.”

‘Breeze’ Bar Staff Member, Leicester

6.5.5 Comparative perceptions of each brand

Staff in each brand were somewhat disparaging about the other brand, particularly relating to the workplace constraints and controls. The data analysis revealed a distinct pattern in their comments. For example, staff in ‘Stephensons’ viewed ‘Breeze’ negatively because of its overly informal style, its limited standards and equally limited range of product offer. ‘Breeze’ staff perceived ‘Stephensons’ as formal, serious and repressed, restricted by rules and regulations. However, some ‘Breeze’ team leaders and managers stated that if they were to have a longer term, managerial career within the ‘Pubs & Bars plc’ company as a whole, they would need to progress to other brands with more complex, sophisticated standards of

performance. This reflected their views and recognition that in the licensed retail sector, they would have to accept highly prescribed brand offerings, with greater imposition of constraints on behaviour in the workplace.

In terms of the constraints on behaviour within the company as a whole, there was little communication across the two brands, even when the respective pubs were within a short walking distance in the same city centre. The brands were so connected to their own brand identities and cultures that such contact was generally deemed unnecessary, and only served to emphasise the difference between them. This was even the case with pub management who tended to know managers in their own brand much better than the manager of the pub down the road:

“Never met the manager at the ‘Stephensons’ pub down the Euston Road...he sends his staff over here to borrow things but there’s no real communication...I know the other ‘Breeze’ managers round here very well. My staff wouldn’t want to work in a ‘Stephensons’ house, though maybe they would help out...just different really.”

‘Breeze’ Pub Manager, London

“I have visited the ‘Stephensons’ house down the road...had a quick chat with the LHM there.... but we don’t have much contact....we have area meetings with other LHM’s in the brand....actually I thought the atmosphere was different there, the customers were older as well, quite a few drinking on their own. There did not seem to be much fun in the atmosphere. The staff were right miserable though I probably should not say that.”

‘Breeze’ Pub Manager, London

“Really good here actually....I did a few shifts at the ‘Stephensons’ pub nearby and to be quite honest would not want to go there again if they were short staffed and asked for help.... It’s friendlier here, like home really....the ‘Stephensons’ pub has a high turnover of staff and that does not help the team working thing....you need a bunch of mates to stick together for a while before they really work as a team, don’t you.”

‘Breeze’ Team Leader, Reading

“Don’t have any need to visit the ‘Breeze’ outlet....I prefer the standards here, the variety of customer....anyway the brands rather stick to themselves, always in touch with my counterpart at Didsbury.....you talk through new standards, issues, same culture so it helps.”

‘Stephensons’ Pub Manager, Manchester

6.6 Workplace relationships / group

The importance of the workplace group within organisations and within an understanding of organisational culture has been established from a range of literature and perspectives. The anthropological tradition, as in the analyses of Geertz (1973), Douglas (1973; 1978; 1982) and Martin (1992) encourages the study and description of the behaviour between group members, the strength of their associations and sense of belonging, as the group members develop their means of coping with the prevailing degree of *grid*, the rules and constraints imposed by the organisation and its espoused culture. The organisation is not seen as a monolithic entity with one strong, integrative corporate culture, but as an amalgam of sub-cultures that differentiate the overall culture through developing their own identity, norms and values (as in Bate, 1992; Martin, 1992; Meek, 1992; Ogbor, 2001). Sub-cultures become “symbolic domains” (Trice and Beyer, 1993: 175). Mars and Nicod (1984: 125) consider that strong group cultures are concerned with the survival of the group as an entity in the wider world, not just the group at work, and that individual members, “interact with the same people at work, during leisure, in place of abode and on family occasions.”

6.6.1 Work groups and multi-site companies

A multi-site, licensed retail chain provides an appropriate research locus for consideration of cultural aspects concerned with work groups and workplace relationships. The parent organisation, 'Pubs & Bars plc', coordinates and controls certain key aspects of the behavioural and attitudinal message across the whole company through corporate and HR policy initiatives such as the induction programme, employee handbooks, employment terms and conditions, workplace regulations and training programmes. In the tradition of creating an integrative and corporate culture, the company wants to influence the behaviour of all its employees. This is particularly evident in its emphasis on customer service, monitored by the mystery customer programme.

However, the corporate organisation is then structured through clearly defined brands, which possess their own proposition regarding behaviour, style and themes in the drive to appeal to certain market segments and consumer demands. Any fundamentalist notion for a monolithic, strong corporate culture across this multi-site firm is challenged by the different brands, the different pub units in different locations, and the different groups of managers and employees within each outlet. The hospitality industry as a whole, and the licensed retail sector in particular, consists of a labour process based on small groups or shifts of individuals who need to support each other and gain satisfaction from working as a team in an often stressful and pressurised work environment (see Ashness and Lashley, 1995).

The *group* dimension was explored with the employees across all the pub units to gain insight into how workplace relationships developed and how the culture and sub-cultures of the specific workplaces developed. It is evident from the interviews that the employee experience is affected by the policies and procedures of the multi-site organisation, but the nature and strength of employee commitment particularly develops within the specific pub workplaces and with the people with whom they work.

6.6.2 Development of employee commitment

The responses of longer-service employees point to a commitment to the organisation and to fellow workers that develops aspects of affective, continuance and normative types of commitment during the course of their employment (Allen and Meyer, 1990). Individuals reported that they had taken the work for purely instrumental, income-related reasons, but that such a basic motivation was affected by generally enjoying the work itself, alongside the satisfaction felt from the development of strong workplace relationships. The corporate training, qualifications and career development opportunities facilitates the development of a continuance commitment towards the brand and company. These factors echo the work of Appelbaum et al (2000) regarding the elements of successful high performance work systems that enhance commitment to the organisation. The development of a normative commitment to colleagues emanates from the strength of the work group and workplace relationships based on a sharing of personal values, beliefs, and norms (see also Bate, 1992). This normative type of commitment is particularly

relevant to work groups in 'Breeze' outlets, employees feeling that they have an obligation to support each other and overcome the problems and cope with the stress of service work, findings supported by the work of Korczynski (2003).

There is evidence from the respondents that a normative commitment, centred upon the unit and the co-workers within that unit, becomes the main influence for longer-service workers, those for whom the initial training and development programmes were long past. These employees declared much personal, moral support for the pub managers and co-workers. Respondents regularly declared their personal commitment and loyalty to the manager, to the pub itself, and to their colleagues. Secondary to these considerations came expressions of a feeling of a commitment to the particular brand in which the pub operated. As can be seen from the quotations below, the commitment of established workers emanates from a range of factors, from corporate / HRM elements to the nature of the brand and particularly to the pub unit and fellow employees:

"I think I'm really committed to the brand, it's got a set of rules you followand I work for the manager who's been dead good to me....he's very approachable."

'Stephensons' Bar Staff Member

"My loyalty is to this pub....management are fine....really helpful with my training....being trained well which is very positive, even makes a career in it seem possible, wouldn't have thought that a few weeks ago."

'Stephensons' Bar Staff Member

"My commitment is to this pub and the manager....we get on well....mostly with all the other staff too."

'Stephensons' Team Leader

“I would say that I am committed to this pub and my manager, and I want to do well for him and this pub....if I moved elsewhere I would go for an internal transfer, preferably in ‘Stephensons’I know the standards.”

‘Stephensons’ Team Leader

“There’s a commitment by the staff and customers to the pub....they want it to succeed because they don’t want it to change or close or not be here.”

‘Breeze’ Pub Manager

“Commitment and loyalty is all to the Pheonix (the pub’s original name) and to the brand.”

‘Breeze’ Kitchen Staff Member

“Really committed to the brand....I’ve had a long association, nearly 7 years and there’s a lot of internal promotion and development.”

‘Breeze’ Pub Manager

“My commitment is to the Polar Bear (pub name), the brand’s great because you socialise and work at the same time....there’s a good relationship between management and staff....wouldn’t want to work anywhere else than this pub.”

‘Breeze’ Bar Staff Member

“It’s the pub really....good manager, friendly....the colleagues are a good team, a good group of people, and the customers are generally a good mix.”

‘Breeze’ Bar Staff Member

6.6.3 Work group cohesiveness

As indicated in the last quotation, the value of working within a cohesive team was a feature of responses from the employee interviews across both the brands. Employees were quick to report the significance of personal support for each other in the shift teams, supporting each other in highly meaningful ways, in both physical

and emotional terms, displaying a strong personal commitment, as revealed in these statements:

“Yep, you’re one team....if another team member is getting a hard time from a customer or it looks like it might get nasty....we’re over there in a flash and helping out or getting the manager.”

‘Stephensons’ Bar Staff Member

“I have a particular fondness for working here at this time....it would be a real wrench to leave the other team members here because honestly they are such a good bunch and work should be something like that. Shouldn’t it?”

‘Breeze’ Bar Staff Member

Respondents expressed the pleasure of working repeatedly with the same team of colleagues, regularly rostered together as a group, and they tended to use behavioural terms in describing the social interaction within work groups:

“Each shift definitely has its own personality....and when you’re on with some people you know that so and so’s going to be funny, have a laugh, pull yer leg or whatever....and you know it’ll be fun but hard work and you look forward to it....yeah, each shift member seems to take on a character.”

‘Stephensons’ Bar Team Leader

“There’s a lot of good chat, gossip, lot of fun working in this team, it’s a bit like Eastenders here in Reading.”

‘Stephensons’ Bar Staff Member

“Once in you can soon pick up the skills needed, the team will help, and it’s good for outgoing, fun-loving people, good for the right type of person who fits in with the team.”

‘Breeze’ Pub Manager

It was also clear from these findings that the group would regulate itself in often subtle ways, notably if one member of the group was not perceived to be integrating and carrying out their job properly in support of their colleagues, the successful cohesion and performance of the group being so significant:

“We definitely all muck in and help each other....part of the good thing of working here....if someone doesn't they'd get a little nudge in the right direction or one of us would tell the manager that they're not fitting in.”

‘Stephensons’ Bar Staff Member

“The team takes care of any issues mostly amongst themselves....they'll soon tell me if someone's not pulling their weight.”

‘Breeze’ Pub Manager

Interviewees were particularly animated and eloquent when reflecting on the cohesion and support within a group when under extreme work pressure in high volume business periods, almost the “supreme test”, as one employee put it, of the strength of the group and the relationships within the group:

“With a group that's been working together for shift after shift, then there's a sort of unspoken thing going on....you know just what to do, who to help out....and nobody needs to say anything....that's sweet when that happens.”

‘Stephensons’ Bar Staff Member

“We have a relaxed group. Nice atmosphere....people willing to learn from their mistakes and not throw a wobbly....team work well when they're busier....I say ‘Into Battle!’ on a night we know we'll get hammered and everyone, well almost everyone, go for it.”

‘Stephensons’ Team Leader

“The people here are fine, it's social, relaxed compared with office jobs, and when you're working hard in a good team, it's cool... kind of rewarding really, you get a buzz, it's fun even when you're getting hammered.”

‘Breeze’ Team Leader

“We have a good team spirit here generally, though the pressure does get to people and there can be blow-ups at times but at the end of the night....2 in the morning sometimes on Friday and Saturday, we all sit down and have a drink and a chat.”

‘Breeze’ Bar Staff Member

The strength of association within groups and the commitment of some individuals to the group as a whole was particularly striking, and was frequently expressed by

individuals in terms of non-work concepts and language, such as social life, home and home-life, family, friends and leisure activities. However, the analysis of findings identified that from across all the interview transcripts this means of expression was more prevalent within the perceptions of the ‘Breeze’ brand employees than those within the ‘Stephensons’ brand units, exemplified by the ratio of quotations below:

“I think also coming from a big family myself, I’m one of 14 children, it’s a bit like I’m part of another big family. At home, mum and dad were always fair but with such a lot of kids they had to have rules, be strict when needed, otherwise it would have been chaos. Here’s pretty much the same.”

‘Stephensons’ Team Leader

“The teamwork’s great, lots of nice staff, my sort of age, we like the same sort of things. I can remember the first day, meeting other team members and thinking they seem alright, sort of people I’d go around with, go out with to a club, like the same sort of music, clubs, so that’s really good.”

‘Stephensons’ Bar Staff Member

“This is the best job for having real friends at work, people like me, liking the same music, talking about the same bands, films, clubs....I have a lot of fun at work but I don’t drink here because it’s too far from where I live to come back into town again.”

‘Breeze’ Bar Staff Member

“Long hours so I guess you get time to build relationships....it’s like a family really this team....good mix with locals, no bad issues....you feel needed here, and everyone’s good about helping out even at short notice when you get a call that someone’s sick or something.”

‘Breeze’ Team Leader

“The staff are great, really work well together as a team....like a bunch of friends really. I’m not bullshitting you. You can be yourself, don’t have to put on an act because you’re all pretty well the same....young, student –oriented, have a good talk, chat about music, sport, all tend to have the same sense of humour.”

‘Breeze’ Bar Staff Member

“I like things to be sociable, non-conflict centred, working as a team with like-minded others....and here I never want to say, ‘ Oh God, I’m not working

with Him!’we still socialise here when not on duty, clearing glasses if we can see that they are up against it.”

‘Breeze’ Bar Staff Member

“Oh yes, very important to me to be working as a team, like mates working for each other and that’s what we try to keep going....we often socialise here outside of work hours.”

‘Breeze’ Team Leader

“It’s like a second home....I use the pub as a customer as well. It’s close to home and uni....and you have to work as a close team when you’re on a club night.....there’s a night club upstairs, and you’re working til 3 am some nights.”

‘Breeze’ Bar Staff Member

The blurring of work and leisure is characteristic of ‘Breeze’ and forms one of the critical differences between the brands studied, affecting the way in which the ‘Breeze’ employees ascribe meanings and purpose to their place and space of work and the relationships between group or team members.

Differences between the two brands emerged when discussing with employees the strength of workplace relationships and specifically the cohesion of work groups. There was a preoccupation in the responses of ‘Stephensons’ employees concerning the importance of workplace stability and their perceptions of the impact of labour turnover on the development of work group relationships.

“ When a team knows each other, sticks together then the group work really well and you get a buzz from working fast, everyone knowing what they have to do....like clockwork....it’s when you have staff leaving that it becomes more stressful and people lose it and shout and so on.”

‘Stephensons’ Team Leader

“We try to work closely as a team, but with people always leaving... the turnover.... can detract from that....it breaks up the teams and then you have

to put more experienced ones with the new ones and that breaks up the teams even more....it really is better if you can keep shifts largely together so that the team members get to know each other.”

‘Stephensons’ Team Leader

“It’s good when you have a team that works well together....works regularly together I mean....but we are short-staffed a lot of the time and that causes more upset and mistakes to happen.”

‘Stephensons’ Team Leader

“Not easy here...in fact I would say there is no real cohesion, but there is coercion. When you have a high turnover....you tell people what to do today because they might not be here tomorrow, so attitudes and behaviour can be hard....it is a difficulty.”

‘Stephensons’ Pub Manager

Research within ‘Stephensons’, as suggested by these latter quotations, revealed a challenging cycle of workforce instability along with a lack of work group cohesiveness and strength of association between group members. On the evidence of employee responses and perceptions offered here, there is a weaker *group* dimension in ‘Stephensons’ than within ‘Breeze’. This insight is particularly important when considered alongside the findings that suggest that compared with ‘Breeze’, ‘Stephensons’ employees work within a workplace culture that imposes on them a stronger *grid* or body of rules and constraints.

6.6.4 Impact of the customer on employee behaviour

A further critical difference emerged in the responses from employees of the two brands regarding the challenge to service work teams and their perceptions of the customers and their needs. The customer presents a critical third element to the service sector workplace, another member of what Sandiford and Seymour (2007) have termed an ‘occupational community’ within public houses. The licensed retail

workplace culture is not only a mix of an organisation and its employees (individually and in groups), but is impacted by the actual presence and participation of the consumer. It was established earlier that ‘Stephensons’ pubs have a much wider customer base, with a broader range of consumption needs than ‘Breeze’ in terms of product and service. ‘Stephensons’ possesses a more complex food and beverage offer with more tightly prescribed operational standards. The following quotations are typical of responses that link the extensive mix of customers in ‘Stephensons’ and the effects that such an eclectic market and product offer can have on workers and workplace relationships:

“I suppose some staff just don’t fit in to the team, sometimes it’s so busy when they start....there was a girl last week....they get all flustered and they’ve got to learn quickly in ‘Stephensons’....all the drinks, beers, the food, menu, promotions and being town centre it gets very packed in here...she freaked out and left the same night.”

‘Stephensons’ Bar Staff Member

“Definitely it’s a challenge to the team as a whole with so many different types of customer....office staff at lunchtime, fairly relaxed, a few regulars at the bar, we’re supposed to discourage that and get them to sit at a table and be served at the table, but some really want to stand and chat....lot of office workers after work, specially Friday’s....then nights so different, lot more of Reading’s wonderful youth on the rampage....clubbers, noisy, possibly some trouble....it shows you how staff and the teams have to adapt.”

‘Stephensons’ Team Leader

“Also the business mix is hard here, very transient staff, and customers for that matter....some staff can’t adapt you know....you need to be clever enough to know, to understand what the customer’s after, what their needs are....and respond appropriately.”

‘Stephensons’ Team Leader

“So you have to weigh up customers and deal with them as they want....different between lunch, afternoon and dinner time....always different people in here.”

‘Stephensons’ Bar Staff Member

The service work challenge to staff in following the service culture message, as highlighted in the *Team Member Handbook*, to react and adapt appropriately to different customers and their different needs was clearly perceived as a greater challenge for 'Stephensons' bar staff. This complexity of customer base was accompanied by a complex hospitality offer in terms of the wide range of products and service standards. The level of cohesiveness and stability of membership within the work groups were often insufficient to support individuals in overcoming the challenge of service work in a workplace culture of significant social controls and constraints on behaviour.

Within the 'Breeze' brand, the need to react and adapt appropriately to the customers presented a much simpler challenge. The customer base was largely restricted to one demographic profile with an equally limited range of needs. The hospitality offer was similarly limited in its product range and service standards. The one-dimensional nature of the 'Breeze' operation reduced the level of technical challenge during even the busiest periods, and harmonious workplace relationships and strong group solidarity gave support to the employees when work pressure was high. This enhanced ability to cope with pressure in 'Breeze' emerged prominently within the extensive employee comments across the brands regarding their perceptions of stress and tension in service work, and the emotional impact staff felt their job was having on them.

Interviewees within 'Stephensons' reported their feelings and anxieties of being pressured in their work and experiencing stress when faced with the difficulties of

delivering high quality customer service to a disparate customer base. As Lashley (1999) notes in his analysis of emotional labour within a café-bar organisation:

“Employee performance requires, therefore, more than the traditional acts of greeting, seating and serving customers. Employees have to be able to provide both the behaviours and emotional displays, to match with customer wants and feelings.” (Lashley, 1999: 797)

There is linkage here to Korczynski’s concept of the ‘customer-oriented bureaucracy’ (2002). The pub has the rational features of organisational bureaucracy in terms of the specifications, standards, rules and procedures, but is then faced with a customer who desires not only the efficient fulfilment of substantive and rational needs such as food to eat, but also has needs for the fulfilment of symbolic and irrational needs such as gratification and irrational feelings of being in control or power. Employees are charged with, “responding to the customers’ desire for pleasure, particularly through the perpetuation of the enchanting myth of customer sovereignty” (Korczynski, 2002: 64).

‘Stephensons’ employees feel they are placed in a challenging customer service work setting, with more potential for stress and inner conflict caused by emotional labour issues, as managers and supervisors apply simultaneously ‘hard’ HRM demands for efficiency and productivity, and ‘soft’ HRM encouragement to behave appropriately and with commitment to customer service. Such is the brief for the company’s *Mystery Customer* audit and it is not surprising that this corporate control and monitoring procedure is viewed extremely negatively by employees, especially so in ‘Stephensons’.

The employees in 'Breeze' pubs are faced with a very different customer base, one which is predominantly within one demographic grouping and market segment. The customers' reasons for being in 'Breeze' are largely confined to relaxation and leisure, young people 'chilling out' in informal surroundings and a vibrant atmosphere. The employees also perceive that they and the customers have much in common in terms of age and lifestyle profiles, interests, conversational topics and even use and style of language. Indeed, as related earlier, the employees readily become customers when off duty, comfortably mixing with the clientele, wishing to be part of the pub's surroundings and offer. In this way, there is a social and cultural connection between employee and customer that does not exist in 'Stephensons'. There are less pressures on 'Breeze' employees to develop adaptive emotional displays towards the many different types of consumers, each with an array of needs.

The issues raised by employees regarding stress and customer service in relation to the demands for putting on an appropriate emotional display will now be discussed. The next section deals specifically with matters concerning the employees' perceptions regarding these critical service industry matters, embraced within the concept of emotional labour.

6.7 Emotional labour and the employee experience

The rise in significance of the service industries within a highly competitive business environment has been accompanied by an increasing amount of attention being given to customer service along with the psychological and emotional interaction between

employee and customer. As we saw in Chapter 4, from Hochschild (1983) onwards, there has been an emerging research agenda concerned with the management of emotions at work of both employee and customer (Noon and Blyton, 2007), with notable mainstream commentaries by such as Fineman (1993, 1999), Leidner (1993), Mann (1999, 2007). There have been insightful articles based on research within the hospitality industry by such as Ogbonna and Harris (2002), Lashley (2002) and Seymour and Sandiford (2005).

The topic of emotions at work arose frequently in the interviews with employees in both brands, most frequently connected to the high pressure and high volume peaks of business experienced within the pub sector. In line with the findings of Lashley (2002) and later Mann (2007), the 'Pubs & Bars plc' company promotes a consideration of human emotion and behaviour in customer service from the commencement of employment via the extensive '*Customer Service*' sections of its *Team Member Handbook*. Indeed, the instructions, or 'emotion rules' (after Seymour and Sandiford, 2005) could not be more explicit concerning body language, eye-contact, smiling and talking: '*Be open, Welcoming. Non-defensive*'; '*Look at each person and remember you smile with your eyes*'; '*Smile: They can't help but smile back*'; and '*Talk: Don't wait until they speak, initiate the conversation. For example: 'Hi, I'll be right with you*'. Further instructions include guidance on reactions and recommendations for appropriate behaviour with regard to the telephone, handling complaints, and serving customers with disabilities. This emphasis on guiding the emotional display of employees has been the subject of findings within both the retail and hospitality industries by Ogbonna and Harris (1998, 2002).

This corporate guidance on emotional display and behaviour is common to all employees, aiming to inculcate employees into the desired corporate culture of customer service. However, differences between brands emerged from the interviewees in terms of the perceptions, experiences and ability of staff within each brand to follow this guidance.

6.7.1 Emotional labour and working in ‘Stephensons’

It was noted earlier that staff in strong, cohesive workplace groups expressed satisfaction in being successful as a team in coping with high volume business patterns. They were manifestly proud to be a group of employees working together both efficiently and effectively under spells of extreme pressure of work. These types of comments came from employees across both brands. However, it was also the case that staff in ‘Stephensons’ related more negative aspects of workload pressure and stress. Their remarks included frequent references to issues of work group instability, the complex and demanding customer mix and the more extensive product and service offer. The inference was that employees in this brand needed to be more adaptable and subtle in their emotional and behavioural displays:

“Customers are not always very patient as you know....you have to stay calm, hide your real feelings and just get on, take it sometimes.”

‘Stephensons’ Bar Staff Member

“Get so many different types....posh to prats....you have to deal with anything....some need the charm offensive, others the chat about the weather, and some need quick service and no more chat than is necessary, not wanting to linger.”

‘Stephensons’ Team Leader

“The pressure and stress comes from lots of different types of customer and sometimes awkward situations.”

‘Stephensons’ Bar Staff Member

“There’s a lot of stress at certain times....including some boring afternoons when there’s hardly anybody in the pub....sounds daft I know, but I can’t stand it when it’s that quiet....and then you go to the other extreme and you’re pulled out of it.”

‘Stephensons’ Bar Staff Member

“I did a spell in the kitchen but I hated it. Kitchen staff are hard to find and keep....not much fun back there, all hot, pressure of orders and very much on your own.”

‘Stephensons’ Bar Staff Member

These quotations portray the various strands and subtleties of emotional labour required of staff on minimum wage, simultaneously providing the customer in front of them with high quality product and service whilst ensuring that that same customer feels welcome, important and special. The employees perceive the need to make the appropriate emotional response despite the pressure under which they are likely to be working. This adaptive response may well be forced, ‘acted’, or may be an example of social embeddedness, a natural and harmonious approach to social interaction (Korczynski, 2002, 2003), which does not cause any emotional dissonance (Mann, 1999). However, these employees feel they are placed in some very difficult and emotion-laden customer service situations that were often described by interviewees as the most stressful:

“Some customers are mostly dead nice....a few get moody, aggressive.... and you’ve still got to be nice to them and polite, which is not easy....we get all sorts in here, from students to businessmen, and you have to change how you deal with them, but always be nice, not easy, you feel different on the inside sometimes I can tell you.”

‘Stephensons’ Bar Staff Member

6.7.2 Emotional labour and working in ‘Breeze’

Situations of emotional stress and tension were not limited to ‘Stephensons’ by any means, but the comments from ‘Breeze’ employees contained very few references to stress and pressure, and when such issues were raised, they were usually counterbalanced by how the ‘team’ dealt and coped with such challenges. Whilst ‘Stephensons’ employees quickly related incidents and outcomes of the workplace pressure and stress, often without indicating how to overcome such difficulties, ‘Breeze’ employees reported equally quickly how work group relationships and the strength of the sub-culture helped them to cope:

“There are pressures and you have some evenings when it really gets to you... but the next day you have a real laugh with the others and the customers as well sometimes and it seems much better.”

‘Breeze’ Bar Staff Member

“I would say that with the pressures of dealing with different situations, people when they’re drunk and aggressive sometimes, I’m personally more confident, your people skills certainly develop.”

‘Breeze’ Team Leader

“Mainly they leave because the work’s too hard, some people just don’t want it...I’m proud when I say I work at the Footage...there’s a lot of stress mind on all staff, but with good teams, good people to work with you and help, you get over it.”

‘Breeze’ Bar Staff Member

“There’s a lot of stress at times when you’re really busy on a Friday night on late opening...but it’s good to relax with the rest of the team afterwards, gone 1 o’clock sometimes, we sit down and have a pint together, knackered, but OK...job done really.”

‘Breeze’ Team Leader

‘Breeze’ employees confirmed that they experienced stress and pressure as in any high volume service business, but they felt able to rely on the support of the

workplace relationships. Their interaction and relationship with the customer was also perceived differently from that in ‘Stephensons’. This was not only due to less complexity of customer mix in ‘Breeze’ as discussed earlier, but also due to feeling more ‘equal’ in terms of the similarity of demographic profile. This equanimity between employee and customer in ‘Breeze’ creates a service encounter relationship where there is mutual affinity and understanding:

“I like ‘Breeze’ pubs because of the age group, a lot of friends drink and work in them, mostly locals and students....90% of the customers and the staff are students....and this certain level of education and cultural similarities help keep the place decent....you can have a good conversation.”

‘Breeze’ Pub Manager

“ A lot of the punters are just like us behind the bar, like us when we’re on a night off....makes it easier, less hassle, more relaxed.... nobody standing on ceremony.”

‘Breeze’ Bar Staff Member

This ‘equal’ relationship between employee and customer in ‘Breeze’ reduces the potentially stressful impact of ‘customer sovereignty’ and helps to maintain the ‘fragile social order’ (Korczynski, 2002). The service encounter is thus facilitated by the relationships between demographically similar workers and customers, as well as a lack of rules and controls imposed by offering a limited range of products and service standards. This is not the case for ‘Stephensons’ employees, who have to fulfil the many needs of many different types of customers, where the ‘customer sovereignty’ impact is not eradicated and a more formal relationship exists between worker and customer. The ‘Stephensons’ situation is also resonant of the proposition of the simultaneous application of ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ HRM approaches in service work. The potential for increased and damaging workplace stress exists to a greater extent in ‘Stephensons’ than ‘Breeze’. In ‘Stephensons’, employees have instructions

to provide, simultaneously, very high standards in customer care but also to follow the rules, the standards of performance manuals and be efficient and productive.

The challenge for ‘Stephensons’ employees is exacerbated by the high level of employee turnover in that brand, fragmenting the workplace groups, affecting the efficiency of teams, and leading to a cycle of recruitment and training. A Team Leader in the ‘Stephensons’ brand said, “it’s really maddening when you spend weeks training someone up to the standards and how to do everything and then they decide they’re going to leave.” To gain insight into that intention to quit the job and to withdraw from the workplace, moves us to the heart of this thesis. The next section considers how employees feel about their work in terms of intentions over staying or leaving, and how this is affected by the workplace culture and the wider corporate culture of the organisation.

6.8 Employee perceptions of labour turnover in the workplace

In presenting the findings of the interviews regarding job change and turnover intention, the analysis aims to gain a better understanding of how and why the employees reach the point of intending to quit their job. In accord with the psychological theories of labour turnover, the issue of commitment as a precursor to intention to quit will be explored. In line with research output centred on the hospitality industry, the existence of a turnover culture will be addressed as a key element in the analysis of the commonalities and differences that emerged from the employees themselves about working in these brands. The debate surrounding turnover culture is itself a synthesis of the literature on the concept of culture and the

phenomenon of labour turnover. Our intention is to examine the possible existence of a turnover culture and to investigate its impact on turnover intentions.

6.8.1 Employee perceptions of turnover in ‘Stephensons’

As noted earlier in this chapter, ‘Stephensons’ employees participating in the research regarded labour turnover and its impacts on workforce cohesion as a negative factor which led to work group instability and operational difficulties in dealing with complex customer demand whilst maintaining service quality. In their responses to questions about why they might intend to quit the job, they would often begin with a general comment about pay and wages, comments which would later be expanded by discussion about the stressfulness of the work. Employees perceived the vicious cycle of high labour turnover, leading to more recruitment, more training time, leading to fragmented workgroups and more stress and pressure, leading to more turnover (in accord with Schlesinger and Heskett, 1991). To exemplify their responses, the following series of quotations are taken from ‘Stephensons’ bar staff and team leaders across all this brand’s pubs visited:

“I guess it’s the case that most people leave because of pay, or many students round here who work part-time while at university just graduate and move on.”

“People may want to leave because of money, not liking the late night work, and for some they just graduate and leave the area, it’s a shame when people leave....groups work together much better when the team members are the same each shift.”

“I think the hospitality industry expects too much, there’s so much stress with serving all the customers, getting it right, smiling, supervisor’s on your back to get the queues down, all that and poor conditions too.”

“You get quite high turnover so keeping groups together to sort of bond is tricky, sometimes the pressures get to a group and it ends in buckets of tears.”

“Turnover is bad as it affects everything else....slows you down when you to keep training and correcting new staff.”

“Turnover is a curse because you lose the team spirit....lose the knitting together.”

“The social side of ‘Stephensons’ is still good when you get a good group on a shift who know each other and can have a laugh....but very often it’s more new staff and it just doesn’t work....they come and go here, I only know a couple of the current staff.”

“There’s a professionalism in how you react to customers which some people just don’t have....it’s like they don’t care about the next customer.”

“Why do they leave? Some it’s because they leave the area, some it’s money or hours, a lot it’s pressure and some it’s they just can’t hack the pressure and difficult customers.”

These responses portray the frustration felt by ‘Stephensons’ employees, frequently expressed during the interviews. Employees readily spoke of their concerns over terms and conditions and often felt that there was insufficient satisfaction from other aspects of the employment to counteract that concern. Dissatisfaction with pay adds to a feeling of not being sufficiently valued considering the extent of the pressure and stress of the work. The employees perceive that work groups lack permanence of membership and that workplace relationships based on a sense of belonging and strong association are under-developed. Their comments confirm the weakness of the *group* dimension of the ‘Stephensons’ workplace culture, a culture that also imposes a stronger *grid* dimension on its workforce than that in ‘Breeze’.

6.8.2 Employee perceptions of turnover in 'Breeze'

The employees within 'Breeze' recognised that there were issues concerning terms and conditions of employment, but there was a strong sense that other elements in the work and the workplace compensated the employees for some dissatisfaction in pay rates and hours of work. Stressful aspects of the work were noted but often with a corollary that the team was well placed to overcome such challenges and cope with the pressure and emotional impact:

"Money can be better....I get £6.25 per hour in the kitchen, plus no tips....I think a lot of people see working here as a starter job....enjoyable but not a career job. There's real pressure in the kitchen at times, bar work is more social."

"Financial reasons for sure makes people leave....people see it as a very temporary job....but some like me, see it like that to begin, and then find it's a bit more than that."

"No, overall it's the best job I've had....I mean you get to meet women for a start, well people generally I suppose....it's a social environment, but hard work and the pay's crap."

"Mainly they leave because the work's too hard, some people just don't want it....I'm proud when I say I work at the Footage....there's a lot of stress mind on all staff, but with good teams, good people to work with you and help, you get over it."

"Probably it's the pressure and stress on a busy night, and late working some nights....dealing with conflicts, throwing someone out, there's a lot about anticipating the trouble, being organised, knowing when the rush will hit, and I need to be dedicated to standards of professionalism."

"Despite all the pressures, there's a lot of people helping each other. We recently had a staff party after Christmas, hats and crackers and all, it was great."

These comments reflect a positive tone in the 'Breeze' employee responses. The employees feel that there are compensating factors concerning the work linked to the enjoyment and fun of it and other advantages of social interaction. The 'Breeze' brand has the same corporate *grid* as 'Stephensons' in terms of central HR policy factors, but it is impacted by a much weaker *grid* in terms of standards, range of product and service, and range of types of customers. There is also considerable evidence and expression of the relative strength of the *group* dimension of the culture, with strong elements of association, cohesion and normative commitment between work group members. These are significant aspects in gaining insights into the differences between the brands as workplace cultures, in understanding better how and why the employees feel and behave. In 'Breeze' there is evidence of affective commitment from employee expressions of largely enjoying satisfying and positive work experiences; there is continuance commitment in terms of the training and qualifications offered by the company; and particularly high levels of normative commitment from employees' strong relationships with work colleagues. The staff also perceive a degree of compatibility between themselves, the customers and the workplace which reduces their intention to find better paid work elsewhere.

6.8.3 Labour turnover culture

In determining the existence and nature of a labour turnover culture within the hotel industry, Deery and Shaw (1999) developed the notions of a positive turnover culture (also called a work culture) and a negative turnover culture. Building on the work of Schein (1990), Sheridan (1992), Abelson (1993) and Deery and Iverson (1996), Deery and Shaw's study of Australian hotel employee turnover revealed the critical

factors which distinguish a positive work culture from a negative turnover culture with significant implications for the overall organisational culture and organisational performance (Deery and Shaw, 1999: 393-397). Their findings have considerable resonance for attempting to explain the differences in patterns and intentions of labour turnover between the two brands in the current study.

In line with Deery and Shaw's findings regarding a positive work culture, 'Breeze' employees expressed a strong loyalty and affective commitment to their management, describing their appreciation and perception of positive organisational support (see also Kuvaas, 2007). 'Breeze' employees regularly affirmed their enthusiastic pleasure in the work, the positive and affective commitment indicative of strong work-group culture and mature sub-cultures. They related the satisfaction of interpersonal relationships that develop over time in the workplace. These factors influence the desire to remain within the 'Breeze' units and brand; work is felt to be hard but it can also be sociable and pleasurable. There is felt to be pressure and stress but the strong group culture enables individuals and teams to overcome such challenges and reflect later on the team solidarity that such challenges can engender. The perceived equanimity between worker and customer in terms of social, cultural and demographic characteristics reduces the stress and complexity of the service encounter and adds to the enjoyment of the workplace. The satisfaction of the work and the personal attachment to the workplace is enhanced by the employees' use of the pub as both employee and customer, the blurring of work and leisure, itself an elimination of a major constraint within the regulations that normally impacts on hospitality workers.

The relative impact on turnover intention of the blurring of the work and leisure divide was also found to be present in another study of work culture and low labour turnover in the hospitality sector (a restaurant in Scotland) by Marshall (1986). He noted the “collapsing of the boundary between the worlds of work and play” (1986: 41). In a scenario similar to that found by the researcher in ‘Breeze’, Marshall, who gained employment within the restaurant, relates how employees were encouraged to use the restaurant facilities in their own leisure time, employees becoming customers on their day off:

“Many of the customers were friends and relatives of the employees. Jokes and stories were exchanged over the counters as well as beyond them. We ate the same food as Dixie’s customers, heard the same music and muzak, shared their happiness at weddings and sadness at funerals, were often literally among them.” (Marshall, 1986: 41)

It was evident from the current research that ‘Breeze’ employees shared a similar experience, strongly identifying with the pub and brand, and its customers. They shared the experience with the customers from both sides of the bar, chatting to people of a similar age and educational background, listening to the types of music which people of a similar age would enjoy, watching the same music and sport channels on the many television screens around the pub. In terms of the cultural theory of Geertz (1973), the workplace culture provides an ordered system of meaning and of symbols within which social interaction between employees and customers takes place. ‘Breeze’ employees expressed their reluctance to leave such an attractive cultural setting.

Within ‘Stephensons’ pubs, the links to the ideas of work and turnover culture are more complex. As would be anticipated, more senior and longer-service staff were

generally positive about the brand, and expressed considerable support for the induction and training processes and the pub management approach. However, the high labour turnover rates verify characteristics of a negative turnover culture connected to a lack of satisfaction in the job. It was apparent from the interviews of 'Stephensons' regional managers and unit managers that there was no specific managerial action taking place to tackle the turnover problem, despite the company's own evidence of the link between length of service and productivity. Managers were at a loss to understand the 'Breeze' success in comparison with the relative failure of 'Stephensons'. Unit managers within 'Stephensons' also accepted the norms of high turnover levels as something regrettable but unavoidable. In one 'Stephensons' pub with labour turnover in excess of 170% per annum, the manager told me, "That's just the way it is." These examples of management's inertia and tacit acceptance of prevailing turnover norms and turnover behaviour, a 'turnover permissiveness', are typical of the negative turnover culture concept (Deery and Shaw, 1999).

Other negative turnover culture variables dominating the discussions with 'Stephensons' employees included the level of stress caused by the pressure of the work, the work group instability and the emotional labour involved in dealing with a complex and varied customer mix. Deery and Shaw (1999) highlight the presence of stress and conflict within a negative turnover culture, and 'Stephensons' employees regularly described their stress and pressure because of the high levels of turnover and its impact on the cohesion of the work groups. There was also less of a positive personality fit than in 'Breeze', less of a cultural match between employees and the many different types of customers and between employees and the brand proposition

(e.g. Irishness, Irish music). Personality fit between employee and organisational culture is an element of a work culture that has a positive turnover culture and was first noted by Sheridan (1992), and developed by Deery and Shaw (1999: 396), stating that, “selecting those personalities that fit the culture is important.”

As discussed earlier, employees in ‘Stephensons’ were constrained by many more rules and regulations. This was not only at the corporate and HRM policy level, which was common to both brands, but also at the brand level as well. The *grid* imposed by the corporate culture and the brand culture on ‘Stephensons’ employees was thus much stronger and more restrictive than that on ‘Breeze’ employees, whose behaviour was much less subject to brand standards and customer mix / service encounter complexities. In terms of the *grid* and *group* analysis therefore, the workplace imposed relatively strong *grid* and relatively weak *group* on ‘Stephensons’ employees. In contrast, ‘Breeze’ employees experienced a workplace culture of weaker *grid* and stronger *group*.

‘Stephensons’ employees lacked the same levels of affective and normative commitment, and within a labour market of alternative job opportunities in many other pubs and bars in the locations of the study, the employees responded to the lack of commitment by job-searching for better pay in the main, and harboured the intention to quit when the right opportunity emerged. Negative affective commitment led to a negative turnover culture (see also Meyer et al, 2002), with management accepting high rates of turnover as the turnover norm. Given their higher levels of

affective and normative commitment, 'Breeze' employees felt that to leave their workplace would be a detrimental step to take. Their intention to quit the job was reduced by a positive turnover culture, influenced by their strong feelings of belonging and association with the pub, the brand, the work colleagues and the customers.

6.9 Conclusions to the research findings

The comparative analysis of the two brands has discovered a number of commonalities and a number of differences in the ways that employees perceive and interpret the surroundings of their workplace. The commonalities between the two brands of the case study organisation lie predominantly in the areas of:

- recruitment and socialisation
- the espoused corporate culture
- the corporate HRM policies

The critical differences lie in the areas of:

- workplace constraints and brand specifications
- the strength of work group sub-cultures and employee commitment
- coping with emotional labour and the employee/customer relationship
- their perceptions regarding labour turnover and turnover intentions

The explanations underlying these differences will now be examined as a way of developing an understanding of the relationship between workplace culture and labour turnover intention within service work.

The 'Pubs & Bars plc' strategic actions and messages, re-affirmed by corporate HRM activities and procedures and by area and unit management direction and language, formed the overall attempt at a degree of strong cultural conformity, typical of the structural-functional approach at attaining a unitary culture. For both brands, a workforce of employees with very similar profiles was recruited, socialised, and trained in the same corporate manner. The Mystery Customer Programme was designed to ensure compliance to corporate customer service standards and the more local brand standards. In the cultural analysis of Mary Douglas (1973; 1978), this represents an attempt at imposing certain cultural constraints, rules and structures on behaviour, a public classification of *grid* that defines roles and activity. The 'realist' position of Ogbonna and Harris (2002) is useful here in the form of corporate branding decisions and directives, giving management some means of managing the culture through influencing worker behaviour, particularly towards the customer, and checking on compliance by the workers.

The 'Stephensons' brand has a complex set of *grid* characteristics conjoined in developing a coherent and identifiable offer to its heterogeneous customer base and markets. The work experience of employees is not only impacted by the centralised

corporate and HRM policies and procedures, but also by a range of brand elements and specifications, created by corporate management that dictate behaviour and attitude. The aim is to fulfil the service culture and service standard requirements of the ‘Stephensons’ brand in an attempt to differentiate from competitors. This brand seeks high standards of food quality, more sophistication in the menu offer and in the range of beverages. It possesses particular standards related to the style of service such as the table service instruction for food and drinks. The brand seeks to satisfy the diverse needs of a broad range of customers at all times through the day. This creates a demand for staff to be skilled at a variety of emotional display as well as technical skill. As a result ‘Stephensons’ has a strong *grid* dimension to its culture.

The elements of the organisational and cultural setting for ‘Breeze’ is different. While there is a common corporate culture influence in terms of induction, training, and customer service, and a very similar employee profile selected from the same labour market, the brand-level specifications are very different. There is a more limited range within the customer base. The aim of the brand is to create a relaxed ambience where young adults chat about issues that affect them, and consume low priced products served in an informal style. The service standards are limited and the product range narrow, typified by low priced ‘meal deals’. The targeted market, restricted to young adults, shares many individual characteristics and values with the employees, thus facilitating positive relationships, and less demands for varied and adaptive emotional displays.

The employees within both the 'Stephensons' and 'Breeze' brands perceive that they are affected by the attempt by the company as a whole to instill a corporate culture message centred on a customer service culture. This is enacted principally through the HRM department's policies and procedures that are introduced to all new employees. Beyond this corporate intervention, the brand-level influence on service culture and behaviour is markedly different. In 'Breeze', the employees perceive the pubs to be the sort of pubs they would wish to visit and enjoy themselves as customers. They feel affinity with the specification elements of the 'Breeze' brand from style and ambience to products and entertainment. They perceive that they have much in common with the customer base and do not need to adapt their behaviour radically in providing service of a restricted range of products to a homogenous customer base. This is in contrast to 'Stephensons', where employees feel that they have a significant challenge in adapting their behaviour and emotions towards a wide range of customers, with a wide range of needs for a complex hospitality offer.

Other differences between the brands impact directly on behaviour, values and ultimately on workgroup strength of association and normative commitment. 'Stephensons' suffers from instability of work groups due to the turnover rates and this leads to a cycle of recruitment, training and low performance levels. There is a weak *group* dimension as a result. Factors within the experience of 'Breeze' employees contribute to a higher degree of moral coercion on group members to behave in the manner deemed appropriate by the sub-culture as a whole. The most evident symbolic behavioural factor is that 'Breeze' employees are also encouraged to utilise the pub on their days off, in their own leisure time, becoming customers as

well as employees. This ingredient in the ‘Breeze’ cultural make-up is typical of strong group cultures within the anthropological literature, the individual interacting with the same people at work and at leisure. The group becomes all-important, the individual subordinate to the needs of the group, exemplified in ‘Breeze’ by off-duty staff actually helping on-duty colleagues when the pub is at peak business volumes by clearing empty glasses and cleaning dirty tables. In such instances, culture certainly seems to be a lever for unlocking Storey’s “consensus, flexibility and commitment” (Storey, 2007: 11). As reported by interviewees, this has a highly significant impact on their working lives and relationships within the work group:

“I’m committed to this pub, not just because of the hours I spend here....including socialising....this is like home....there’s a family....we all mostly get on, and even if you’re in here on a night off, you’ll help out, collect dirties.”

‘Breeze’ Bar Staff Member

“This pub has real heart, and everyone likes to be a part of it....great atmosphere as you can see today....come to work and enjoy yourself, but underneath there’s also standards, targets, sales pushes....some staff just come here for the money....the team can see straight through that....and they don’t stay long.”

‘Breeze’ Pub Manager

“This is the best job for having real friends at work, people like me, liking the same music, talking about the same films, clubs....I have a lot of fun at work.”

‘Breeze’ Bar Staff Member

‘Breeze’ employees develop strong associations with colleagues. Membership of the group becomes very important, relationships become solid, and colleagues become friends. Reflecting the *group* dimension of the cultural analysis by Douglas, there is strong group cohesion, strong mutual associations, a strong sense of belonging and

the particular work group or shift want to remain together, even if individual interests could be satisfied elsewhere by a different, higher-paid job opportunity. This setting for culture and behaviour in 'Breeze' resonates with the more anthropological perspective of sub-culture, a group developing through social interaction, where behaviour is governed not only by compliance but by deeply felt underlying assumptions (Smircich, 1983; Martin, 1992; Meek, 1992).

6.9.1 Factors in the culture / turnover relationship

The rich data of the interviews has allowed a real insight into the workplace perceptions of the employees in these pub brands, and of how they interpret and give meaning to their surroundings. Their responses have revealed a range of perceptions and assumptions about their job and work relationships. In particular, the qualitative feedback, documentary evidence and analysis from the case study has pointed to the importance of three major factors in gaining further insight into the relationship between culture and labour turnover intentions of service work employees:

- Espoused corporate values and brand specifications
- The employee and work group commitment
- Symbolic and substantive consumption of the customer

Before considering each of these factors as a conclusion to the research findings analysis, it is useful for us to note that the differences in workplace culture across the two brands became increasingly striking as the interviewing process and the data

analysis progressed. Whilst there were examples of loyal managers and workers in ‘Stephensons’ brand, who considered potential career development enhanced by working in a brand of high standards, most of the front line staff failed to develop the type of commitment evident within the ‘Breeze’ employees. Employees in ‘Stephensons’ felt that the changing membership of work groups added to the frustration and stress experienced by other staff, whilst ‘Breeze’ teams became strong groups, sub-cultures of powerful potential in developing the commitment needed to reduce labour turnover intentions and increase retention rates.

The negative turnover culture of ‘Stephensons’ stands in clear contrast to the positive turnover culture of ‘Breeze’, and the following quotation from a ‘Breeze’ bar staff member typifies the successful, ‘realist’ nature of the brand’s culture, illustrating that there is some level of corporate culture influence but that the groups, the sub-cultures that develop in the pub are truly influential on employee behaviour, commitment and in turnover intention:

“Well because of the closeness of the team, we are very much a together group of staff....we do enjoy ourselves but we know when to stop and make sure the customers are getting good service etc....and we know that we must not be too outrageous.....as far as being part of a big company is concerned, I only realise it when we have staff meetings and we are told, ‘you have to do this or that.’”

‘Breeze’ Bar Staff Member

6.9.2 Espoused corporate values and brand specifications

It has been evident in the data and its analysis that there was an attempt at a unified, corporate culture across the ‘Pubs & Bars plc’ company. The company specified the

component elements of the brand, its targeted market, its values and, via HRM policies and procedures, the company also influenced employee behaviours, emotion rules and attitudes towards a customer service-oriented culture. The nature of the specific brand's blueprint then influenced and affected the employees in their behaviour and attitudes, aiming to create a product, service, atmosphere and style appropriate to the target market. Such a specification determined the degree of constraint, the restricted code, the *grid* imposed by the culture on the workforce, stronger in 'Stephensons' than 'Breeze' in this study. Employee rules and regulations in 'Breeze' were much more relaxed and informal, such as being able to socialise in the workplace when off-duty. The extent of *grid* imposed by the culture on the employees had influence on the behaviour of those employees and their intentions regarding job search. Therefore the first key factor in understanding the relationship between organisational culture and labour turnover intention is defined as the *espoused corporate values and brand specifications*.

6.9.3 The employee and work group commitment

Although all employees began their jobs for much the same instrumental reasons and on the same terms and conditions as well as receiving the same training, the employee perception of the actual experience within each brand varied markedly. Within 'Breeze', staff felt there were strong personal relationships in the workplace, a strong *group* culture, developed from an affective values orientation, exemplified by strong sub-cultures, association and sense of belonging and commitment towards the group and its members. Work groups in 'Breeze' remained relatively stable of

membership, employees placing satisfying, enjoyable work group relations above alternative employment. Within ‘Stephensons’, employee responses evidenced much less affective commitment, but there was a degree of continuance commitment in more senior and longer service personnel who envisaged the prospect of enhanced career development from within a higher standard brand. For front line staff, the feelings of a lack of affective and normative commitment meant that alternative, higher paid jobs were an attractive option in the prevailing negative turnover culture. The intention to search for a new job was an accepted part of the workplace culture. For ‘Breeze’ employees, the high level of commitment to workplace colleagues reduced the intention to job search, reduced labour turnover intention and contributed to a positive turnover culture. The second key factor in understanding the relationship between organisational culture and labour turnover intention has been termed *the employee and work group commitment*.

6.9.4 Symbolic and substantive consumption of the customer

The service work triangle has been completed by reference to the customer. The customer mix pertaining to each of the brands is very different. ‘Stephensons’ employees are faced by a complex and wide-ranging set of customers and demands, whilst ‘Breeze’ employees deliver service to a limited demographic of customers who are content with a more limited level of price, product and service. Indeed, the service encounter in ‘Breeze’ was notable for a commonality of demographic between employee and customer, affecting the dynamics of the relationship between service provider and service receiver. Customers in both brands have substantive or

rational needs to be derived from the transaction, but customers in ‘Stephensons’, whether business executives, dining couples or high street shoppers, have more exacting and symbolic demands in terms of recognition and status for their particular needs and their desire for ‘enchantment’. The customer mix is a factor in determining the degree of emotional labour required from staff; the more complex the customer base, the more challenging the service encounter. With acknowledgement to the customer-oriented bureaucracy model of Korczynski (2002), the third key factor in understanding the relationship between organisational culture and labour turnover intention has been termed *the symbolic and substantive consumption of the customer*.

These three factors form the foundation for the contribution to knowledge from this research that will be outlined in the final chapter of this thesis.

Chapter 7

Contribution to Knowledge

7.0 Introduction

The primary purpose of this chapter is to make clear the nature of the contribution to knowledge that has been discovered from this investigation. From the analysis of the research findings within the case study organisation, a theoretical proposition is developed as a means of helping us understand the relationship between organisational culture and labour turnover intention within service work. The chapter aims to move on from the specifics of the case study findings to the more generic application of the findings and subsequent analysis. In doing so, it is important that we clearly understand the domains of applicability of the knowledge and its practical applications.

Responses from employees, coupled with documentary analysis, have given insights into the phenomenon of labour turnover and turnover intention within a particular, service-oriented workplace culture. These insights form the basis of the contribution to knowledge. They demonstrate a new understanding of the relationship between organisational culture and labour turnover within service work. As a result of the analysis of the research findings outlined in the previous chapter, it is now understood that the relationship between organisational culture and labour turnover intention in branded service businesses is affected by three major factors: espoused

corporate values and brand specifications; the employee and work group commitment; and the symbolic and substantive consumption of the customer. These three factors provide the foundation upon which the theoretical position is constructed and from which the practical applications are developed.

In addition to mapping the uncontested terrain of our new knowledge and exploring the outer limits of its applicability, this chapter will also reflect on the implications for practitioners within the service industries and the future research and curriculum possibilities for service work researchers and students. This chapter also considers the methodological contribution, usefulness and applicability of the theoretical framework of the grid / group model within research into organisational culture, HRM and service work. The chapter will conclude with personal reflections on the research process of this study and some closing remarks.

7.1 The platform of the contribution to knowledge

Before considering the broader theoretical and practical considerations of the thesis, the case study origins of the contribution to knowledge are now drawn together. Within the ‘Pubs & Bars plc’ case study, the relative impact of *grid* and *group* cultural analysis (Douglas, 1978) in the workplace was considerable, especially when linked to the interrelationship of corporate and HRM policies, brand specifications, employee perceptions, and the variability of the customer base. In contrast to ‘Breeze’, the ‘Stephensons’ brand imposes a strong *grid* on its employees. Moreover, in addition to these corporate and HRM policy constraints, ‘Stephensons’ imposes a

brand-specific service culture with extensive rules and regulations alongside elaborate service and product standards. The aim of the 'Stephensons' brand is to fulfil the varied needs of a wide and complex range of market segments. The different types of consumers that populate these market segments require fulfilment of their specific needs. 'Stephensons' employees must be technically capable and behaviourally adaptive in providing the extensive range of products and services to a wide range of customers.

As an outcome of the demands to vary their emotional displays towards the different customer types, employees in 'Stephensons' pubs perceive that their work experience induces stress and tension. Furthermore, the prevailing high rates of labour turnover in 'Stephensons' (185% per annum across the brand's employees) impacts on the stability of work group membership. The sense of belonging, association and satisfying workplace relationships, characteristic of strong groups and sub-cultures, are not present in 'Stephensons'. Hence, alongside the strong *grid*, there is a weak *group* dimension to this workplace culture. There is a greater willingness to seek a readily-available, alternative pub job, where the pay is better and the stress might be less. The intention to leave and the resultant turnover typify a negative turnover culture, only adding to a vicious circle of fragmented groups and shift teams where the group cohesion and the strength of the sub-culture are weak.

In contrast to 'Stephensons', the workplace culture in the 'Breeze' brand is much less affected by brand-level rules, standards and constraints. This brand offers a narrower

range of products and service standards to a restricted market segment. The consumers within this one-dimensional segment also share a similar demographic, lifestyle and cultural profile with the employees. There is affinity and equanimity between employee and customer in terms of age group, education and experience, topics of conversation, and of preferences in music and entertainment. They share similar interests and engage in a discourse that is generally harmonious and mutually rewarding. These factors culminate in employees experiencing and perceiving a lack of social barriers between service worker and customer. The substantive, rational demands of the 'Breeze' consumer need satisfying, but the symbolic demands seeking power and 'sovereignty' from the encounter are minimal, limiting negative stress and fragile social order problems, implicit in Korczynski's model of a customer-oriented bureaucracy (2002).

The emotional labour dimension of service work is thus restricted, as 'Breeze' employees do not feel the need to act and adapt their emotions and emotional displays to the same degree as those employees in 'Stephensons'. There is a mutuality of understanding between employee and customer in 'Breeze'. There are less emotion rules to learn than in 'Stephensons' as the customer participates positively within this occupational community (see Sandiford and Seymour, 2007). The barriers and status differentials are lower to the extent that the same individual might be worker one day and wish to return as customer the next. There is an alignment between the cultural characteristics and behaviour of the employees and the cultural characteristics and behaviour of the customers in 'Breeze' that is lacking in 'Stephensons'. There is further alignment between both employees and customers

with the 'Breeze' brand itself, a mutual affinity with the component elements of the brand specification and its proposition in terms of the style of service encounter, ambience, décor, products and services. The brand's physical and symbolic characteristics appeal to both employees and customers.

Work groups are strong in 'Breeze', and a moral imperative is felt by employees not to break up a successful, supportive and contented work group. In this positive turnover culture, employees intend to stay in the job rather than seek and search for other, perhaps better paid jobs. 'Breeze' employees form close-knit groups, not only loyal and committed to each other, but also to the manager and the workplace. The employees engage in social interaction within the workplace and willingly carry this over to their leisure time. Such overlap or blurring of work and non-work roles is further developed in 'Breeze' by the accepted practice of using the premises as both employee and customer (see Marshall, 1986).

In Chapter 6 it was concluded that a relative harmony or 'fit' developed across the 'Breeze' brand in the tripartite relationship between the brand, the employees and the customers. It is proposed that this harmony leads to the high levels of satisfaction and employee commitment within 'Breeze'. It is further proposed that the employees' perceptions and feelings of harmony engenders a strong loyalty to each other and a sub-culture of strong and mutual association in which the interests of the individual really do become subordinate to those of the group. This harmony is created by an alignment and what might be regarded as a compatibility of cultural elements and characteristics between the brand, the employee, and the customer. It

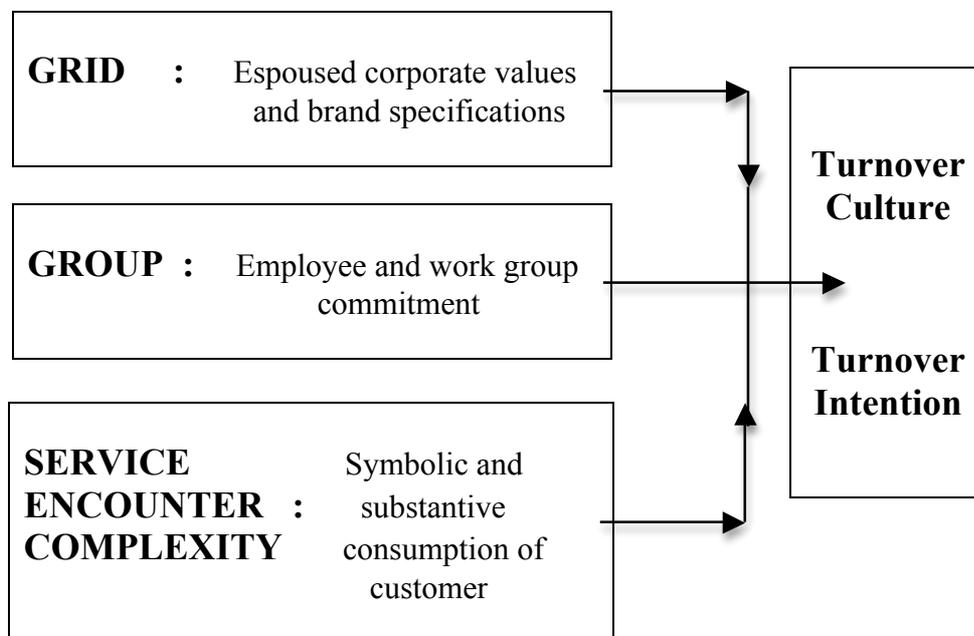
results in strong corporate performance by ‘Breeze’ relative to ‘Stephensons’, and in a reduced intention to quit within ‘Breeze’ workers and a positive labour turnover culture. The nature of the knowledge that has contributed to our understanding of this dimension of the hospitality industry is strongly evidenced from the research findings, but it is also interesting to explore the outer limits on the boundaries of the applicability of this new knowledge.

7.2 The contribution to knowledge

This chapter now moves away from the specific findings of the case study organisation and to the wider theoretical considerations and practical applications of the findings for service industry management and scholars. The substantive contribution to knowledge is confirmed and illustrated by the development of a model of cultural alignment and labour turnover and by the use of a metaphor to demonstrate its practicability. There is also consideration of the methodological contribution of the grid / group model within service work and HRM. The specific contribution to knowledge that has been determined from this study provides a framework for gaining insight into the relationship between organisational culture and labour turnover intention within service work. In particular it identifies the three key components of the service industry workplace culture that influence the nature of the turnover culture and the propensity of an employee to stay or leave their employment, and presents a means of analysing them.

As depicted in Figure No. 15 below, there is the *grid* imposed by the workplace culture (Douglas, 1978), derived from the espoused corporate values and brand specifications. Secondly, there is the *group* dimension of the workplace culture (Douglas, 1978), derived from individual employee and work group commitment (see also Meyer et al, 2002, Paauwe, 2008). Thirdly there is the *service encounter complexity*, derived from the symbolic and substantive consumption of the customer (Korczynski, 2002). It is evident that these key factors affecting the workplace culture need to be seen by employees as being in a particular (cultural) alignment for a positive turnover culture to develop. Such a culture is characterised by reduced employee intention to quit and subsequently reduced rates of actual labour turnover (Deery and Shaw, 1999).

Figure No. 15: Service Workplace: Cultural Alignment and Labour Turnover



Employees will wish to remain as members of strong work groups or sub-cultures if they perceive a beneficial alignment between these factors, creating a harmonious working environment and workplace, a positive turnover culture. On the other hand, an alternative perception of the nature of the alignment between the three key variables will result in a negative turnover culture with commensurately increased intention to quit by employees and greater levels of staff leaving.

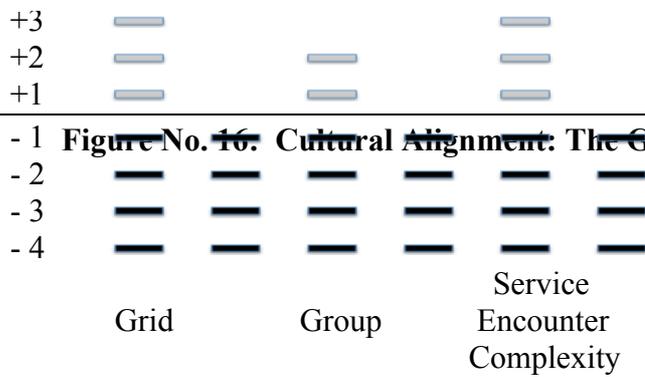
7.2.1 Workplace culture, alignment and turnover intention

The cultural alignment model proposes that employee intentions regarding staying or leaving will be affected by the perceived relative positions of the three key factors of grid, group and service encounter complexity. Perceived compatibility between the three factors leads to a feeling in employees of harmony in the workplace, a positive labour turnover culture in which they desire to retain membership of their work groups. Employees also feel able to deal more effectively with the stress and emotional labour challenge of service work (Mann, 1997, 2007). A perceived incompatibility of the three factors will lead to a feeling of disharmony and a negative turnover culture. The usefulness of such a theoretical consideration is in its ability to provide a framework within which researchers may study, and practitioners may develop service organisations and service cultures that are characterised by high levels of employee commitment, performance and workforce stability.

However, it must be emphasised that these propositions are not founded on a scalar, objectively measurable interrelationship between the factors, but rather an explanation of the perceived relativity existing between them. As will be discussed in more detail shortly, the theoretical position proposes that it is the relativity of *grid*, *group* and *service encounter complexity* that helps our understanding of how employee labour turnover intentions are impacted upon by the prevailing workplace culture.

7.2.2 A metaphor for understanding the model

In developing the notion of cultural alignment within a service-oriented workplace, the three factors of *grid*, *group* and *service encounter complexity* can be seen as the individual ‘sliders’ or ‘faders’ on a graphic equalizer, depicted in Figure No. 16 below. The relative positions of the three sliders seek to achieve the desired balance of output, determining the level of harmony. Each slider on a graphic equaliser has its own scale and values, but the listener’s perception of the desired harmonic output in terms of sound is dependant on the correct balance between all the sliders. Different musical compositions may well require a different pattern of sliders, for example some music may need more treble, some more bass. The importance of the sliders is that they are relative, not absolute.



In applying the graphic equaliser metaphor to this study, there are three critical sliders: firstly *grid* ; secondly *group* ; thirdly the *service encounter complexity*. A movement of one such variable will have an impact on the harmonic balance between all three variables. The implication of the metaphor is that if one slider is moved, the impact of this change needs to be assessed and the other sliders reviewed and adjusted accordingly. There is no absolute position that indicates exactly where the slider should be positioned, as each set of circumstances needs to find the most effective relative alignment. Furthermore, effective alignment needs to be validated by the listeners and how they perceive and feel about the sound created.

In terms of organisational culture and labour turnover, this metaphor provides an insight into the wider applicability of the contribution, where the employees are the ‘listeners’. If employees perceive that they are subject to highly constraining social controls dictated by corporate and HRM policies, a strong *grid* dimension, then it

will be critical to review the relative strength of the *group* dimension. Strong *grid* and weak *group* has the potential to be out of harmonic balance and lead to low employee commitment as a precursor to labour turnover intention. Equally, if corporate management decides that the *service encounter complexity* ‘slider’ needs to be shifted in terms of increasing the range of product and service standards to meet a more heterogeneous customer mix, then it must be realised that such added complexity may increase the employee perception and feelings of service encounter stress, of emotional labour and of a heightened *grid* dimension. This shift may need to be countered by the development of stronger work groups. At a practical level, managers will need to re-discover the perceptions and feelings of the employees (the ‘listeners’) in the face of any change to the factors which may have resulted in a perceived harmony in their workplace.

The metaphorical graphic equaliser needs the three ‘sliders’ to be seen to be aligned in accordance with the cultural and operational characteristics of the brand / organisation. The resulting level of congruence and harmony within the workplace culture can only be assessed by eliciting the perceptions and feelings of the employees themselves. Awareness of the relativity of these key components will aid service industry management in their understanding of culture, employee values orientations and behaviour, and labour turnover intentions, so that appropriate measures are taken which create the balanced harmony needed for the benefit of the employee, the customer, and the organisation.

7.3 Theoretical Considerations

It is evident that the boundaries of the applicability of the knowledge uncovered in the case study extends beyond the immediate sectors of pubs and restaurants. This section moves forward our considerations to the wider application of the knowledge that has emanated from this research study. In particular, it seeks to examine the boundaries of its applicability. It is important in the search for broader generalisability of the cultural alignment model to consider the circumstances in which the theoretical proposition would be applicable. In so doing it will provide insight for researchers and practitioners in other sectors into the relationship between the cultural elements of the workplace and the labour turnover intentions of its employees. The contribution to knowledge regarding cultural alignment and labour turnover intention generates the potential that extends its explanatory insights to a wider terrain. It is important that we ask ourselves: What are the boundaries of the types of organisation in which the theory may be applied? What are the conditions and constituent elements required for the theory to generate the understanding that we have seen it is capable of?

We have seen that the findings and theoretical considerations from this study are predicated on the service triangle of organisation, employee and customer, and the inseparability of the service encounter, where production and consumption are simultaneous (Reeves and Bednar, 1994; Lashley, 1997). The conventional face-to-face interaction between service worker and customer within a service-oriented space is a prime setting for wider and practical application. The boundaries of application could be limited to such fundamental ingredients as the encounter of an employee in

direct contact with a customer. Such a boundary would contain many sectors of the service industry. It would include commercial sectors such as hospitality, tourism, travel and transport, retail, financial services, theatres and entertainment venues, professional and trade services and management consultancy. However, a service encounter is also present in other, less overtly commercial services, such as the health service and personal care, local government offices, museums and galleries, and educational institutions.

Whilst the nature of the employee/customer relationship might be perceived differently in different sectors (as in the health service or consultant / client relationship for example), the fundamental feature of the encounter of individuals from individual cultural and social backgrounds still applies. A deeper understanding of culture and its application to organisations and services will give more insight into the challenges, tensions and emotional content of each encounter. From a 'realist' perspective in terms of organisational culture (Ogbonna and Harris, 2002), the cultural alignment analysis of *grid*, *group* and *service encounter complexity* also provides managers with potentially valuable insight and understanding into how the organisational culture and managerial practices imposed upon employees might affect behaviour and the service encounter outcomes. Managerial awareness of the impact of *grid* and constraints on the workplace culture becomes a significant factor in developing the most appropriate and supportive environment.

It is useful to consider specific theoretical constructs within service work to gauge the applicability of the cultural alignment approach. The tightly controlled brand concept of a highly standardized service operation, such as in fast food restaurants, provides a typical setting for relatively high *grid* classification. The employee is working within a system of industrialised service operations and processes, providing a limited range of products and services of low complexity, and is in interaction with the customer for less than one or two minutes. In such a situation, the importance of the *group* dimension is paramount, facilitating the development of strong work groups and close association between team members.

Apart from the *grid* and *group* factors, the fast food setting also highlights the importance of the lapse of time in which there is contact between employee and customer in order to build the relationship. It does not seem unreasonable to suggest that this element of duration of the service encounter, the time it takes for the encounter to be completed, will have impact on the workplace culture. It exemplifies the service work characteristic of employees simultaneously providing high levels of customer care and organisational efficiency, their managers imposing both 'soft' and 'hard' HRM approaches (Korczynski, 2002; Legge, 2005). Managers need to understand the importance of, and the reasons behind, the development of strong work groups and employee commitment in such workplace cultures, supported by HRM practices that encourage both commitment and performance (Appelbaum et al., 2000; Paauwe, 2004, 2008).

Other service encounters may create further challenges; for example, a toll-road booth operator has only a few seconds of interaction with the driver as customer. The momentary exchange of ticket for money is the highly repetitive extent of the encounter. Furthermore, the employee is normally a sole operator (as our pub chefs in the case study), confined to a small physical space without any co-workers with whom to build relationships and for the *group* dimension to counteract the constraints of the work. The relationship with the customer is also fleeting and very unlikely to be repeated. In other sectors, such as airport check-in desks, the duration of the service encounter might be relatively lengthy, but the service worker is very unlikely to ever encounter that passenger again. In this situation relationship-building between employee and customer has potentially less of an imperative than in some sectors characterised by the importance of repeat business.

There are many service situations with similar characteristics of short encounter duration and sole working: ticket offices, information desks, reception desks, payment windows, and call centres are some examples. In the case of call centre operations, along with other contemporary services where internet and telephonic technology has become a key 'partner', the customer is only a disembodied voice. In this case the customer is not present in the encounter but the model can still provide insight into the workplace culture. Such a workplace is dominated by targets of caller numbers handled, social controls such as scripted telephone responses and a lack of interpersonal and work group interaction. In such settings, there are high levels of *grid*, low levels of social interaction, a short duration of remote customer interaction

and a limited product and service range. There is potential for emotional conflict, for low employee commitment and for the resultant intention to quit.

Away from the commercial service sector, public sector services present a service encounter with both similarities and differences. The relationship between nurse and patient, between teacher and student, or between charity worker and donor, may be a re-defining of the employee and customer service setting, but the cultural alignment approach still provides a framework for analysis. The three major factors remain present: the organisation may not be an identifiable brand (though branding is increasingly adopted by not-for-profit organisations) but it will espouse the core values of the organisation and communicate rules and regulations; the importance of effective and well-developed work groups will be crucial in situations that are sometimes challenging and stressful; the customer or client frequently has substantive needs which are expected to be fulfilled, perhaps more a case of utilitarian delivery of the service rather than 'enchantment', but symbolically important none the less.

These theoretical considerations of the applicability of the model of cultural alignment in service work demonstrate it to be a powerful tool in helping our understanding of a wide variety of service-oriented workplace cultures. The analysis of the relativity in alignment of *grid*, *group* and *service encounter complexity*, is thus postulated as having relevance across all service workplaces. It provides explanations of the relationship between the workplace culture and employee

behaviour in terms of labour turnover intention, and in understanding the reasons why labour turnover is high as well as low.

Moreover, it is postulated here that the cultural alignment approach is of value in helping our understanding of the interrelationships of employee, customer and organisation, whether or not that service-oriented organisation is a multi-site, branded business. Many service businesses are small, single location and independent, run by a sole trading entrepreneur. Entrepreneurship continues to create many new independent service firms, particularly in retail, hospitality, professional and trade services and personal care services. As with the corporate executives of multi-site chains, each entrepreneur determines the nature of the business, structure and staffing, the targeted customer, the mode of operation and the products and services to be offered. Independent service businesses can still be informed by the cultural alignment concept. The fundamental components are in place: an employee and a customer engaged in a service encounter where a desire for consumption is exchanged for the service of a particular product. Analysis of each setting by reference to *grid*, *group*, and *service encounter complexity* will provide insight into the relationship between the workplace culture, the level of employee commitment and the propensity of employees to stay or leave their employment.

7.3.1 Methodological contribution of *grid / group* analysis

The theoretical considerations resulting from this study are notably influenced by the work of Mary Douglas and her two-dimensional framework for cultural comparison, *grid / group* analysis. With its basis in anthropological research and societal studies, the model has seldom been applied to organisations and workplace behaviour (Caulkins, 1999). It is the conclusion of this study that the model is highly relevant to research within contemporary organisations, as it addresses two central issues for workers and organisations: the identity and status of an employee as determined by group membership and allegiance; and the impact on employee behaviour by the organisational grid of external power or hierarchy. These issues are of equal concern to the intertwined concepts of organisational culture and HRM. The Douglas model allows for exploration of the fundamental, epistemological dilemma in researching culture and organisations, namely whether culture develops through membership of sub-culture groups or is determined by the corporate imposition of values and behavioural constraints. In this way the model also gives insights into the role of HRM and its frequently stated goals of high performance, high commitment and consensus, goals that may be threatened by high rates of labour turnover and workforce instability.

Within the service sector, there are particular reasons for considering the adoption of the model. The quest for a strong service culture in such companies is manifested in attempts at standardization of service quality and employee management initiatives. The resulting policies and training procedures are corporate strategies designed to

ensure that competitive advantage is attained through the customer service skills of the employees. Strongly branded service firms additionally seek to establish and replicate the service culture in many locations, dictating individual and group behaviours and values, urging employees to ‘be yourself’ and ‘go the extra mile for the customer’, whilst strictly following the brand rules and regulations. The analytical framework of *grid / group* has the flexibility to allow the researcher or practitioner insight into the relativity of such emotional labour pressures on employees.

7.4 Practical applications for service industry managers

It has been noted that many corporate executives consider culture and culture change worthy of substantial investment in contemporary organisations (Martin and Frost, 1999; Van Maanen, 2001; Legge, 2005). The cultural alignment argument is a significant contribution to service industry management and their considerations of service culture in the workplace, culture change and employee behaviour. It advises that the elements of a corporate brand specification be designed and implemented in a more integrated fashion, particularly the cultural interrelationships of the brand specification, the employee and the customer. Branding is a means of imposing a degree of strong, integrative culture on the organisation, especially when placed alongside corporate HRM policies and procedures. However, the model of cultural alignment proposes that brand concept development and a structural-functional approach at its implementation is informed by an understanding of organisational culture from a social anthropological perspective, such as the significance of values

and social interaction in groups and differentiated sub-cultures within the organisation (Martin, 1992). The resulting workplace culture seeks a 'fit' or congruence between the brand's corporate controls, cultural characteristics of the workforce and the cultural characteristics of the customer base.

Corporate branding, based on market and consumer research, gives service industry management an opportunity to influence the culture of an organisation through its design and specification of the brand, aiming to derive a service culture that appeals to the targeted customer. However, the commercial success of the brand and its service culture can be affected detrimentally by high levels of labour turnover and instability of work teams that lead to service failure and customer dissatisfaction. The cultural alignment analysis provides managers with a framework, a managerial tool with which to assess the relative influence of the key components on employee behavioural commitment and employee labour turnover intentions. Such an assessment will inform the actions and managerial initiatives to be implemented in managing labour turnover.

In this way, corporate executives must not only consider the alignment and 'fit' between brand and consumer, but between brand, consumer and employee. HRM departments need to review recruitment and selection procedures of service workers, to consider the attributes, interests and cultural profile of the employee candidates in line with the brand concept, its desired service culture and the profile of the targeted consumers. There are implications for person specifications and selection methods which go beyond previous experience and technical skills, which go beyond

personality ‘fit’ with the job and move towards personality and cultural ‘fit’ with the brand and the consumer. Groups of employees need to be supported by appropriate HRM policies, such as skills training and career development opportunities. Stability of the workforce is in turn enhanced by the development of affective, normative and continuance commitment of employees for whom retaining their work-group membership becomes a powerful driver.

The cultural alignment approach provides service industry managers in all sectors with a template for the analysis of their organisations that will give insight into the relationship between the prevailing culture of the workplace and the employees’ intention regarding staying or leaving. It urges managers to consider the relativity between the three factors of *grid*, *group* and *service encounter complexity* when addressing human resource issues. In possessing a better understanding of this relativity and the implications for culture and behaviour, managers have a means of acquiring a deeper understanding of why employees feel and act as they do, and why labour turnover is high or low. Such insight is powerful in informing and helping service industry managers to respond to an external environment of change and increased competition, and retain the commitment of a stable and capable workforce. It is important to note that the model is not just an analytical tool but gives direction to managerial action in terms of the policy and procedural changes and adjustments required to maintain the balance and alignment of the three key factors of *grid*, *group* and *service encounter complexity*.

7.5 Future research

The wider application of the knowledge contribution regarding cultural alignment in service has been considered within this chapter. Through a series of theoretical constructs within different types of service organisations it has been postulated that in all such service encounters this analytical approach will provide insight and understanding of employee behaviour and labour turnover intention. Future research is now required to test this proposition within different sectors of the service industry, from the purely commercial sectors to public service and not-for-profit organisations. Research is recommended which applies the model to sectors with particular service encounter characteristics, identified earlier as elements such as: time duration of the encounter; sole working environments; internet-related and telephone services; the lack of repeat customer interaction; and the re-defining of the employee/customer relationship within non-commercial organisations.

Future research should also concentrate on service work employment in terms of HR planning, recruitment and selection methods in line with market segmentation, where cultural and personality types might fit a particular service organisation more appropriately than others. This would require HRM practitioners to possess a deeper understanding of the concept of culture and the social anthropological approaches connected to organisational culture. From the branding perspective, this study has revealed the performance advantage of designing brands with both the customer and the employee in mind. The employee profile needs to be a strategic component of the brand proposition, and their backgrounds, personality 'fit' and cultural attachments

are potentially more important than their technical skills and experience. A match between employee and organisational culture offers the potential for stronger employee commitment and workforce stability (Sheridan, 1992). There is room for more qualitative research here, discovering more about the 'realist' interpretation of organisational culture, and the spheres of influence that lie between the impositions of corporate policy such as branding and HR policies, and the power of sub-cultures emanating from the social interaction of service work employees.

For the academic researcher within service work in general, and the hospitality industry in particular, there is opportunity for future research into the broadening epistemological approaches. From the hospitality and service operations managerialist heritage is emerging a wider intellectual perspective which is also keen to learn and apply the precepts of other academic domains (Lashley et al, 2007). The growing interest in the concept of organisational culture is bringing the researcher into contact with anthropology and sociology and with the principles of the social sciences. These approaches can assist in deeper analysis of the employment problems within service industries, particularly the human resource problems of employee commitment, emotion skills and labour turnover levels with their detrimental impacts on service quality (Redman and Matthews, 1998).

This multi-disciplinary approach to future research within organisations, whether service sector or not, has necessary implications for the curriculum and learning of future researchers. For example, if research is to be influenced by the traditions and

theoretical perspectives of social anthropology (e.g. Douglas' work) or of sociological approaches (e.g. Korczynski's work), then the curriculum of business and management schools need to be reviewed with such precepts in mind. Following the study related in this thesis, it is certainly the contention of the researcher that the business courses specifically related to service industries require a broader concept of service work rather than a predominantly pragmatic operations management focus. Similarly, more generic business and HRM programmes of study would be enhanced by more consideration and academic underpinning regarding the particular challenges of the labour process of service work, in particular regarding emotional skills, culture and the customer (Korczynski, 2005: 3).

Future research agendas could therefore consider the epistemological and methodological implications for the study of service work, drawing more from the techniques and experience of the social science tradition. The shifting emphasis towards qualitative methods and away from quantitative methods in management and employment research in general is infiltrating the approaches of those researchers within the more specific service work domain. This is exemplified by the adoption of the techniques of sociology as in methods in the area of biography and life and work histories (Ladkin, 1999). This latter method, originally applied in quantitative approaches, requires further exploration of its usage as a qualitative tool within service industry studies. Within the current study this technique provided a valuable element of the interviewing schedule and particularly revealed the extent of commonality of the workforce demographic characteristics and values. Application in other sectors may be analytically more problematical if confronted by a workforce

of a more disparate profile, and would test the effectiveness of this methodology in different circumstances.

7.6 Personal reflections on the research process

In reflecting on the research process as a whole, I have considered the amount of learning that has taken place. I embarked on this project with the work history background of a lengthy career within the service sector and the hospitality industry as both practitioner and educator. The world-view that this career experience had developed has been continually confronted and energised by learning from others. My learning took place in reviewing literature and research output that had not previously been connected to the issue of hospitality sector labour turnover, particularly the anthropological and sociological traditions. Further learning was acquired as I discovered the research by sociologists and anthropologists that had taken place within service work and hospitality, seeking to describe and analyse the issues from a non-operational and non-managerialist position.

I learned from exploring the conceptual links between cultural theory and human resource management, and the additional connections to the psychological school of labour turnover theory. I also learned the value of qualitative management research and in the power of obtaining the employees' perceptions and feelings about their work and labour turnover intentions. The reality of their workplaces was illustrated by their own interpretations. The fact that the research questions were embedded

within a 'live' industry-based case study was invaluable in providing the researcher with motivation and purpose. There was also learning from the merging of research methods, notably the case study comparison utilising semi-structured interviews and the life and work history method to elicit detailed employee information.

There was enormous learning and genuine satisfaction in talking to the many interviewee participants, particularly the employees in the pubs themselves, who responded with such eloquence and cooperation, whose language and discourse gave the research outcomes so much rich data. Indeed, I reflect now that the semi-structured interviewing technique really gave way to a semi-structured 'conversation' with a fascinating group of people. From this privilege I learned the value of qualitative research in gaining in-depth, emic responses and in understanding and explaining how and why people construct and give meaning to the social reality around them.

7.7 Concluding remarks

It is my belief that the outcomes of this research study will be of real value to both researchers and practitioners. I am confident that the application of the concept of cultural alignment within service work will contribute to employment solutions within the service sector as a whole and the hospitality industry specifically. It provides managers with a new approach to their human resource challenges, whether existing problems of workforce instability, or in informing decisions over future

strategic and operational plans. It is therefore my contention that managers will turn to the 'graphic equaliser' of the cultural alignment model and consider the relativity of the factors of *grid*, *group* and *service encounter complexity*. Management decisions will thus be informed by consideration of the interrelationship between the espoused corporate values and brand specifications, the employee and work group commitment, and the symbolic and substantive consumption of the customer. The real value of this contribution to knowledge has been inspired by those employees in the case study organisation who participated in the field-work so generously, and whose responses enabled such significant insights into the relationship between organisational culture and labour turnover.

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Appendix No. 1

Example: Interview Transcript from edited Field Notes: 'Breeze' Brand Employee

The transcript has been edited to omit social interchanges and other content not directly relevant to the NVivo analysis by substantive coding.

Nvivo Case Node: Code B4 ('Breeze' brand Interview No. 4)

Date: 02-11-06

Interviewer: Steven Goss-Turner (SGT)

Staff Member Biodata

Location: Polar Bear Pub, Leicester, a 'Breeze' unit

Name: Rob

Age: 21

Gender: Male Marital Status: Single

Nationality / Place of Birth: British, Nantwich in Cheshire

Interview

SGT: Hello Rob, thanks for taking the time to chat with me---let me explain---my name is Steven and I work for the University of Brighton---I've been asked by the company to talk to a whole range of staff right across the company, different brands and so on, as a completely independent person, trying to find out ore about the staff---I want to assure from the start that whatever you say to me is totally confidential, no names or any such detail will be recorded or reported---it's all anonymous---it's just to find out more about the staff in the pubs, how they got their job, what they feel about the job, the company and so on. OK?

Rob: Yeah, that's fine, I'm OK to help with that---actually doing some interviews myself for a uni project

SGT: So you know what it's like, that's good---I 'm going to make quite a lot of notes as we talk, if that's alright---and after I'll just check with you that I've got it right---just for clarification---is that OK?

Rob: That's fine---anyway, it's good to get a break today, been busy---would you mind if we moved to the smoking area as I'd love a ciggie as well as the coffee---thanks

SGT: Yeah, sure---so Rob, just a few basic details first, can you tell me your age and where you were born, married or single?

Rob: Right, I'm 21, single, born and brought up in a town called Nantwich, Cheshire

SGT: Oh right, I know it because I used to live in Chester not far away

Rob: No, not far at all---well that's been home til I came here to university

SGT: D'you mind me asking what your parents do for a living?

Rob: Dad's in the building trade, own business, got a couple of apprentices work for him, Mum actually works in a charity shop in the town a couple of days a week

SGT: So did you got to school in Nantwich?

Rob: Yep, nothing very exciting, primary and secondary school----it was alright even in a place a s small as Nantwich, had quite a good bunch of friends went around with.

SGT: And what exams did you take and pass Rob?

Rob: Right, let's think, got about 10 GCSE's I think---then 3 'A' levels

SGT: What subjects were your 'A' levels in?

Rob: English, History and Psychology---last was most interesting---why I'm studying it now here at uni

SGT: Tell me what you're doing now then ---which University, Leicester ? De Montfort?

Rob: Leicester, I'm in Year 3 of a BA in Human Psychology, been good, enjoyed it mostly

SGT: What is it about Psychology you find interesting?

Rob: I suppose it's just working out how and why people do as they do, what they're thinking, what makes 'em tick that sort of thing-----bit like in this place, lot's of psychology going on here

SGT: D'you think that's why you work in a pub?

Rob: No, can't say it was planned like that---just a job for some cash to help out

SGT: Had you worked in a pub before? Had any training in this field?

Rob: No real training courses, had done a bit of part-time work in a pub back home after first year--- did a bit of retail training in a local supermarket, weekend job

SGT: So tell me Rob about your job here---what's the position, your current job, when did you start etc.

Rob: Been at the Polar Bear---oh—I started in March—this year, part-time barstaff, I do about 12-15 hours a week, lot of students work here---they approached the uni. Notices in the bar, that sort of thing, and went through the application process, including in here, giving you customers to serve, pints to pull, so on, like an audition really---I liked the Polar Bear from the start, nice customers, chilled out atmosphere

SGT: That's good---so what do your duties involve---bar work rather than anything else?

Rob: Yes, just behind the bar, mostly serving drinks, taking food orders, stocking up, changing barrels, cleaning, there's plenty of that, yeah just regular bar work, not kitchen, don't fancy that—can't cook anyway and it's hot, cramped out the back---don't know how they stand it.

SGT: And before this job, what else have you done Rob?

Rob: Well, just the pub in Nantwich, only part-time as well, though I still get work there in the vacations, been there off and on for about 2 years I reckon----also done a few jobs with my Dad in the building sector, helping the family business----and a few shifts at the Tesco---but I preferred bar work, stopped the supermarket job, too boring and bar work is more enjoyable to me, bar work suits me better, my personality

SGT: And it's a job you can do pretty well everywhere

Rob: That's it—really found bar work useful both at Uni and when at home to get some money but also it's usually a good atmosphere, whether you're working or socialising---I know a lot of the people who come in this pub---work here in term-time, leave like some others at the end of term, go home and hopefully be able to pick up the job back there----if you get to know the landlord or manager well, and get on with them, it's a help, and they're glad of you coming back

SGT: Must be good knowing some of the customers well

Rob: Well it helps to smooth things, keep it cool, I come in here myself sometimes. I drink in this pub quite a lot and it's usually good on both sides of the bar----mind I may have to cut down my hours as I get towards graduation now I'm in the final year with a dissertation to do and so on.

SGT: I can see the pattern of your work career to date, thanks Rob, so apart from possibly cutting down the hours because of finals etc., how do you feel about the job and why you would leave it?

Rob: This work is fine for me at this stage, and flexible as well, manager's good on rotas and changing shifts if needed, for uni work, timetables---so leaving is not really an issue at present, in fact I'm not sure what I might do after graduating, finishing the degree next June, so I might stay on for a while until things sort out---the money's useful, not great but useful---and it's a good, fun job, lots of people, friends around, regular customers so why not stay on a bit---Mum and Dad wouldn't be too impressed if I stayed in the pub work for ever though, not after putting me through the degree and everything

I feel suited to this work, I love the music, the talking, you can see I talk a lot---I'm also a bit fussy for a guy, like the bar to be well organised and clean, I clear glasses as quick as I can, anyway it gets you out from behind the bar to talk to customers---and because they let you come here when you're not on duty, I socialise here, so it's like your local as well, plenty of mates come in, similar interests, music so on.

SGT: I see its attractions---but pubs do have a reputation for a lot of staff leaving, what's your experience of why people leave the sector?

Rob: I think there's a lot to be said for working in the industry even though it's hard work, unsocial hours etc.---it does not take a lot of training, customer service can come naturally to a lot of people, and selling, meeting customers' needs is good---you get a lot of training in this pub, company has a strict plan for staff training and the manager goes through it every time, the Handbook, the Checklist and so on. It's all very well organised so you can learn quickly and feel a pratt in front of customers

I think people mostly leave because they just can't do pressure, stress when it's really busy, Friday nights for instance---and they can't weigh up the stress and the pay---others leave because they can't see a carer structure---and managers seem to work as hard and as physically as anyone else

Some staff leave cos they're not really bothered about the work---just get the money---and the pay is not good, but other things do make up for that, especially the people you work with, they're some of your best friends and you don't want to let them down

SGT: So why do you stay, Rob, perhaps even after graduating, what gives you that commitment?

Rob: I work for this pub and the boss---I like 'Breeze' because of the age group, as I say a lot of friends drink and work in them, here and the Dry Dock pub out of town, that's another 'Breeze'

SGT: Yes, I'm going there tomorrow actually

Rob: The customers are here to relax, wind down whether they're students, office workers here in town offices, and some locals ---it's very natural here, no putting on silly airs and graces like posh hotels, you can be yourself working here---just that some nights you are behind the bar and others you are in front---but people behave pretty well the same, you're out with your mates really, whether on a shift or not.

SGT: You seem to talk of the pub but also the 'Breeze' brand

Rob: To be honest, I'd never heard of 'Breeze' or 'Pubs & Bars'---to my way of thinking I work for the Polar Bear and for 'Breeze' and the people here but I know people who work in other 'Breeze' pubs like the Dry Dock and they say the same---I don't feel a commitment to the company, more to the Polar Bear but in a way I would want to work in another 'Breeze' pub rather than anywhere else

SGT: Rob, thanks very much---just touching on you and other staff, you've said that's important, can you help me with a bit more detail about the work teams or groups here?

Rob: Teamwork's really good here, great bunch of people, the management's helpful, they don't make you feel stupid, and we work in teams that really get on---often the same teams are rostered together and you

know just how everybody works. It's the best job for having real friends at work I would say if it all goes well, people who like the same music, chat, talking about the same movies, clubs---and my confidence has risen greatly, th staff are great here, really work well together as a team---I'm not bullshitting you for a good report!---You don't have to put on an act because you're all pretty well the same,---we all tend to have the same sense of humour on my usual team

SGT: Sounds very positive, but what about working within such a large organisation as 'Pubs & Bars'--- and the brand, do you find any problems with that?

Rob: You have to follow rules and procedures of course, that's made plain right from the start with the training scheme, mystery customer thing and so on---but it doesn't seem like it's a big deal---I think there is a lot of freedom to be yourself and have fun at work, which is not bad is it? No problems with management here if that's what you mean, but you do have to follow the rules as I said---managers do expect a lot of you---like yesterday we had a couple of really dodgy customers to deal with, and me and a girl here, Zara, we had to deal with it---makes you grow up a bit I suppose, dealing with difficult customers, conflict---it went alright and your confidence goes up.

SGT: It's unusual for staff to be able to spend their free time on the premises and socialise---how does that square with having to follow the rules, Rob?

Rob: Well because of the closeness of the team, we are very much a together group of staff---we do enjoy ourselves but we know when to stop and make sure the customers are getting good service etc. and we know that we mustn't get out of line too outrageously---as far as being part of a big company is concerned, I only realise it when we have staff meetings and we're told, 'you have to do this or that'.

You don't shit on your own doorstep---if anyone gets a bit pissed, a mate will have a word, people don't take liberties hardly ever---and if someone has a birthday do here and has a few too many---then it's good that your mates are with you---including behind the bar to make sure you get home safely---especially the girls. If I'm in here socially and the barstaff get hammered, I'll clear some tables for them to help---that's what happens here.

SGT: You've mentioned that the work can be pressurised, can you tell me more about that and how it is managed, how you are helped to cope?

Rob: No real issues, managers muck in with you, don't just stay upstairs, other than the rota for weekend, especially Saturday nights, need more notice and it is expected that you will turn in and help out when needed---there's a lot of pressure when it's very busy---but everyone's been great, helping, managers do good training, manager's very approachable.

SGT: So Rob, what about the future?

Rob: Everything is about getting a good degree next summer and then thinking about actual career---as I say I'm not sure---might do a Masters---would probably still do pub work to help with the cash---and if I moved to another uni, I would probably see if there was a 'Breeze' there, or consider another brand in 'Pubs & Bars'. It's possible to take more courses, like the Personal License course, very good that the company pays for that really. OK?

SGT: That's really helpful stuff Rob---I'm going to spend a few minutes writing up these notes and then before I leave, can we just get together briefly for you to check I've got it right so to speak. Eventually I'll be putting all the interviews together and reporting back completely confidentially to the company---

Rob: Fine, glad to have been of help---see you later, better get back now---right.

Appendix No. 2

Example: Interview Transcript from edited Field Notes: ‘Stephensons’ Brand Employee
This transcript has been edited to omit social interchange and other content not relevant to the NVivo analysis by substantive coding

Nvivo Case Node: Code S6 (‘Stephensons’ brand Interview No. 6)

Date: 23-11-06

Interviewer: Steven Goss-Turner (SGT)

Staff Member Biodata

Location: ‘Stephensons’ George Inn, Reading, a ‘Stephensons’ unit

Name: Cathy

Age: 23

Gender: female Marital Status: Single

Nationality / Place of Birth: British, Wellingborough, Northants.

Interview

SGT: Morning Cathy, thanks for taking the trouble to meet up this morning---I’ll firstly make sure you know what this is all about---I’m Steven Goss-Turner, and I work for the University of Brighton, and I’m here on a research project trying to find out more about the people who work in pubs like the George, people like you, why they do the work, how they feel about it, what the good things and not so good things are about the work---now the company ‘Pubs & Bars’ is happy for me to do it, because they’re just as interested as I am---but let me stress that the research and anything I report back to the company is totally confidential, no names, just a summary of issues raised---and I’m doing this in lots of pubs right across the company---as you can see from my note here, I have a series of questions and points to raise which I’m raising with everyone---are you OK about the process?

Cathy: Yes OK

SGT: Well that’s fine and as I say, thanks very much for your time, at least it’s a chance to have a coffee break---I’ll be making a lot of notes on this pad, and then later I’ll check up with you if I may that I’ve got it right

Cathy: No really it’s OK with me, hope I can help

SGT: Right so perhaps if I can start with a few basic bits of information about you, because one of the interests I have is how people came to be where they are, why they’re working here---so tell me a bit about yourself Cathy

Cathy: OK, well I’m 23 years old, single, living here in Reading even though I’ve graduated from university---oh here Reading---working full-time

SGT: And Cathy where are you from originally?

Cathy: Born in Wellingborough, two elder brothers, parents both work, Dad is an office manager for a solicitor’s back home, Mum is involved with a home educating group now but she used to be a teacher, primary school.

SGT: Did she teach you?

Cathy: Oh no thank goodness, different school, though there was plenty of tuition at home! I went to local Wellingborough schools, which weren’t too bad, though I was ill around GCSE’s so didn’t do so well then, sort of glandular fever---but ‘A’ levels went better and got an A and two B’s, Biology, Chemistry and

Geography-----yeah I was interested and better at science but didn't see that as a uni degree choice or career, I was just good at them---but marketing seemed more exciting to me at the time-----

SGT: How did that come about?

Cathy: Well Tom my eldest brother, he did a Business and Marketing degree at Leeds Met and was always on about it in vacations and it seemed good, interesting---and people at school said I was always good at explaining things, talking too much I expect---I took a year out after school because I wasn't sure about what to do, worked locally and did some travelling with girlfriend ---doing the odd job in pubs and restaurants

SGT: So that was your first work in the hospitality industry?

Cathy: Oh I first got some work back home, part-time when I was still at school, about 17 I suppose in a pub restaurant in Kettering, more of a glorified tea-room actually in an all-day open place, but it was OK and the work seemed varied---then at 18 I got a part-time job in a Wolverhampton and Dudley pub near home, behind the bar and that was better

SGT: What was better?

Cathy: The people really. Fun people working there, quite a laugh and lively place too. It was OK as a place to work part-time

SGT: Did you do any courses in hospitality / pub work?

Cathy: Not then, only since I worked here, the P&B Management Foundation Course and Basic Food Hygiene, which were good to do especially as part-timer at the time

SGT: That's good, the courses have helped you then

Cathy: Yes I think it was quite impressive that a pub would give you that training when you're only working a few hours really---and later, when full-time I've done the Personal License Holder course..... and Key Shift Holder training

SGT: Just going back to your gap year Cathy---Did your year-out have any impact on your choice of degree course?

Cathy: Well, I think I'd really always decided to do something with marketing, PR type of work, and to be honest I didn't think much about a career when travelling, I'd already got my place here so it went to the back of my mind for quite a while. Travelling was good for independence though and having to look after yourself, only a few calls home for Mum and Dad's help---usually money

SGT: Tell me about your degree

Cathy: BA Advertising and Marketing Communications, got a 2.1 this summer

SGT: I see, congratulations so you've graduated already---pleased with the result?

Cathy: Yes, worked a bit harder and I might have got a first, but pleased enough, and no worse than both brothers---Mum and Dad pleased too.

SGT: And how did you end up working for this company ?

Cathy: Well actually came into 'Stephensons' in Reading with some friends one evening and thought it had a good atmosphere---liked the place and a few days later came in and asked if there was any work---filled in a form and was taken on that week.

SGT: When was that?

Cathy: Let me think---probably second year so about March 2004---before that I worked at the Goose pub down the road, part-time barwork ---left because it was horrible, rough, glasses would get thrown. But here right from coming in as a customer you felt it was alright, good atmosphere.

SGT: Why take the job at all?

Cathy: Oh needed the money, pure and simple---didn't want to keep asking Mum and Dad for hand-outs after the year out when they helped out a lot---also having done some pub work before, thought it would be quick to settle in

SGT: And things went well for you clearly.

Cathy: Pretty good, always a few problems but got on well with the manager and most other staff, started part-time became a Team Leader for the bar in June 2005, still part-time but more hours, which was good because I needed the money, good training and then when I graduated they offered me full-time so I took it as I'd not got anything else.

SGT: No marketing job / company scheme attracted you?

Cathy: Oh a few attracted me, did a few first interviews after a careers fair at uni but didn't get offered anything---not sure what they're looking for

SGT: And what are your career thoughts at present?

Cathy: Might move if there was a marketing job in a hospitality firm---ideal would be a marketing job in licensed retail---even 'Stephensons' or wider in 'Pubs & Bars'---I like this type of work, company, so ideally I might be able to move that way, keep my nose clean and my profile up there with area managers like---bit pie in the sky probably

SGT: Sounds like you don't want to leave the industry really?

Cathy: Thought about it---but quite happy to work here until a job transpires---something that I really want to do. But here seems like a good thing---there are always bars wherever you go so useful skills and experience---gets you experience in dealing with lots of different types of people and sometimes awkward situations. Feel I've got the makings of a good career with P&B---solid basis---3 years with the manager here, going well enough. Others come and go but I quite like working in the same surroundings, familiar I suppose

SGT: Why do people come and go as you put it?

Cathy: Money issue and to other companies that pay better---for example as a Team Leader I only get 10 p an hour more than anyone else---5.45 an hour---ordinary barstaff at J.D. Wetherspoons get 6 pounds---also sometimes people don't feel appreciated here---turnover is bad as it affects everything else---slows you down when you have to keep training and correcting new staff.

Also, lot of people treat this, as I did originally, as temporary work---students, people out on a limb---so you're always going to have some turnover---but sometimes it's really maddening when you spend weeks training someone up to the standards and how to do everything and then they leave---I think it's pressure mostly---it's very competitive round here---that's why we had to refurbish 6 months ago---and then the Club (Reflex) gets busy sometimes til 3 am with clearing up---and some people are not prepared to do it.

SGT: Is this pressure the main reason for the labour turnover, which I believe is high?

Cathy: Definitely one of the reasons. I suppose some just don't fit in---and sometimes it's so busy when they start---there was a girl last week---they get all flustered and they've got a lot to learn quickly in 'Stephensons'---all the drinks, beers, the food, menu, promotions and being town centre it gets very packed in here and customers are not always very patient as you know---have to stay calm---hide your real feelings and just get on, take it sometimes---she freaked out and left the same night

I think a lot of people leave because they find it hard to be constantly in the public eye---being all smiling when they feel hung over or something---there's a professionalism in how you react to customers which some people just don't have---it's like they don't care about the net customer---that customers are a bloody nuisance---not quite the thing is it.

And mainly because the work's too hard---some people just don't want to work---no pride---there's a lot of stress on us, and also the business mix is hard---very transient staff and customers for that matter---some can't adapt you know---you need to be clever enough to know, to understand what the customer's after, what their needs are---and respond appropriately---I sound like Paul (the boss)

SGT: Thanks Cathy---it's really interesting---and you've worked with Paul, who I met earlier, for some time now and that's a good part of the job for you is it?

Cathy: Oh yes, I mean my commitment is to this pub and the manager---we get on well---and mostly with the other staff. I would transfer within P&B but only for ease. Like to stay within this sort of brand---been in the 'Breeze'---the Upin Arms---it was cheap, good when you're at uni---I don't go in so much now---really for students and here we get all ages and types in the pub.

SGT: You mentioned some frustrations at people leaving the team when you've spent time and effort training them---how does this affect teamwork in the pub?

Cathy: It's actually a real problem to us, me personally actually-- here at the moment---I like it when everyone's having fun---it really can be a fun job---lots of people, good atmosphere---laid back and relaxed, chilled, that's when a team works well and enjoys it. When a team knows each other, sticks together then the group work really well and you get a buzz from working fast, everyone knowing what they have to do---like clockwork---it's when you have staff leaving that it becomes more stressful and people lose it and shout and the like.

It's good when you work in a shift where you know everyone and get on well---sometimes frustrating when you work with new people---but you've got to be understanding---remember how it was for you---there's one or two I don't get on with so well---but not a big problem---to be expected I suppose in any walk of life.

And when you're on with some people... You know that so and so's gonna be funny, have a laugh, pull yer leg or whatever---and you know it'll be fun but hard work and you look forward to it---yeah each shift member seems to take on a character---mind they sometimes change that with the mix of people---and then it changes with the different times of day / night, and the type of customer--- you can be more forceful with punters who are very late, rowdy, and have had a few too many---you would be different with a lunchtime party of office workers who want the food up quicker.

SGT: How are you and other staff Cathy affected by working within such a large organisation as 'Pubs & Bars'?---or within the 'Stephensons' brand---do you find any issues arising out of that?

Cathy: Again, not sure staff feel appreciated by the company---they are appreciated by Paul and the Assistant Managers here---but company could do more---there are some incentives like winning an Ipod at the moment, but there really are a lack of benefits---and big deal when food is half-price on shift.

Yeah there are a lot of procedures you have to follow---and the assistant manager was showing me all the forms, the paperwork she has to do---and the manager ---I didn't know how big 'Pubs & bars' was.

Definitely it's a challenge (in 'Stephensons') with so many different types of customer—office staff at lunchtime, relaxed atmosphere, a few regulars at the bar, we're supposed to discourage that and get them to sit at a table and be served at the table but some really want to stand and chat...lot of office workers after work, enjoying their freedom I suppose so quite different sometimes to lunchtime---specially Friday's---then night so different, lot more of Reading's wonderful youth on the rampage---clubbers, noisy, possibly some trouble---now that's a different game altogether---it shows you how staff have to adapt.

The pressure on staff can be immense. That's the time it really tells is late night--the club especially when a team has to look out for each other---keep an eye on possible trouble spots---the odd scuffle can break out but mostly we have a good reputation for safety, for dealing with things quickly, and that's all down to the staff and of course our very courteous doormen!

Working in a chain does have its rules and so on---well I've worked in chains rather than anything else so I know the ropes as far as the need to manage / control---you need procedures, set standards and so on---yeah sometimes it might be a pain---but then you know you've got the backing of a big company and you're legally covered. You get the training and the possibility of an internal transfer anywhere in the country really.

SGT: Cathy that's been marvellous, thank you so much, a lot of very interesting points for the research side of things---I better let you get back as I can see it's getting busy but perhaps later on I can check back with you my fuller notes to make sure, clarify things---thanks.

Appendix No. 3

Nvivo Coding: Tree Nodes from Data Analysis of Interviews (no particular order)

Tree-Node Codes

Each Generic Code also sub-divided in A ('Stephensons' Brand) and B ('Breeze' Brand)

1., 1A, 1B	Customer Mix Complexity
2., 2A, 2B	Customer Types
3., 3A, 3B	Dealing with Difficult Customers
4., 4A, 4B	Fun and Customers
5., 5A, 5B	Stress
6., 6A, 6B	Pressure
7., 7A, 7B	Emotions
8., 8A, 8B	Labour Turnover
9., 9A, 9B	Reasons for Leaving Sector
10., 10A, 10B	Reasons for Leaving Industry
11., 11A, 11B	Other Reasons for Leaving
12., 12A, 12B	Commitment to Company
13., 13A, 13B	Commitment to Brand
14., 14A, 14B	Commitment to Colleagues
15., 15A, 15B	Teamwork
16., 16A, 16B	Support at Work
17., 17A, 17B	Brand Comparisons
18., 18A, 18B	Working in 'Breeze' Comments
19., 19A, 19B	The Brand 'Breeze'
20., 20A, 20B	Working in 'Stephensons' Comments
21., 21A, 21B	The Brand 'Stephensons'
22., 22A, 22B	Company Policy
23., 23A, 23B	Company Rules
24., 24A, 24B	Brand Policies
25., 25A, 25B	Brand Rules
26., 26A, 26B	Large Organisation Constraints
27., 27A, 27B	Qualifications
28., 28A, 28B	Subjects Studies
29., 29A, 29B	First Graduate Destination
30., 30A, 30B	Value of Degree
31., 31A, 31B	HE Choice
32., 32A, 32B	Degree Attained
33., 33A, 33B	Career Choice
34., 34A, 34B	First Hospitality Job
35., 35A, 35B	Company Introduction
36., 36A, 36B	Perception of Company
37., 37A, 37B	Internal Courses Attended
38., 38A, 38B	Other Vocational Courses
39., 39A, 39B	Hospitality Courses
40., 40A, 40B	Future Prospects
41., 41A, 41B	Career Progression
42., 42A, 42B	Productivity
43., 43A, 43B	Place of Birth
44., 44A, 44B	Marital Status
45., 45A, 45B	Gender
46., 46A, 46B	Age
47., 47A, 47B	Kitchen Work